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(12) **United States Patent**
Thacker

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(54) **REUSABLE CASKET**

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(73) Assignee: **Thacker Caskets Inc.**, Clinton, MD (US)

(*) Notice: Subject to any disclaimer, the term of this patent is extended or adjusted under 35 U.S.C. 154(b) by 0 days.

This patent is subject to a terminal disclaimer.

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Related U.S. Application Data

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(51) **Int. Cl.**

A61G 17/007	(2006.01)
E05B 65/00	(2006.01)
A61G 17/02	(2006.01)
A61G 17/04	(2006.01)

(52) **U.S. Cl.**

CPC ***A61G 17/0076*** (2013.01); ***A61G 17/02*** (2013.01); ***A61G 17/04*** (2013.01); ***E05B 65/0057*** (2013.01)

(58) **Field of Classification Search**

CPC A61G 17/00; A61G 2017/004; A61G 17/0073; A61G 17/0076; A61G 17/02; A61G 17/04; E04H 13/00; E04H 13/006; E05B 65/0057

USPC 27/2, 4, 6, 35, 27; 52/128

See application file for complete search history.

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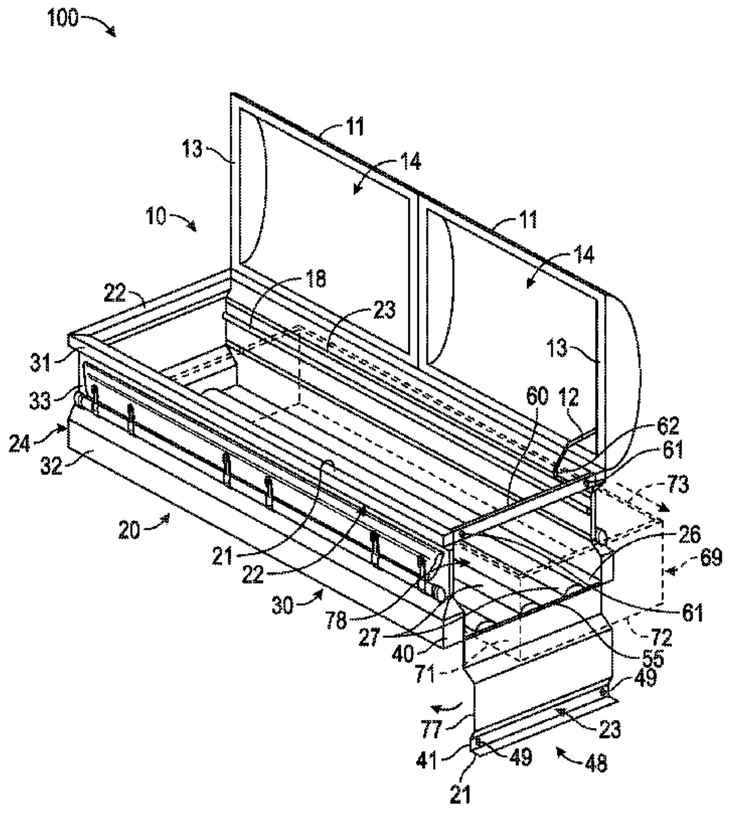
(57) **ABSTRACT**

A reusable casket includes a metal casket box having an opening at one end and includes a panel section rotatably attached to the casket box which is closeable to enclose the opening and openable to allow longitudinal movement of a casket insert into and out of the casket box through the opening. The panel section is retained to each side panel in the closed position by a locking bolt extending through the panel section to engage an interface operatively connected to the side panel. A transverse member may be attached to the opposing side panels of the box to partially define the opening. An end panel of the casket box may include the panel section intermediate first and second lateral sections where each lateral section is fixedly attached to a respective one of the opposing side panels and the panel section is movable relative to the lateral sections.

18 Claims, 11 Drawing Sheets



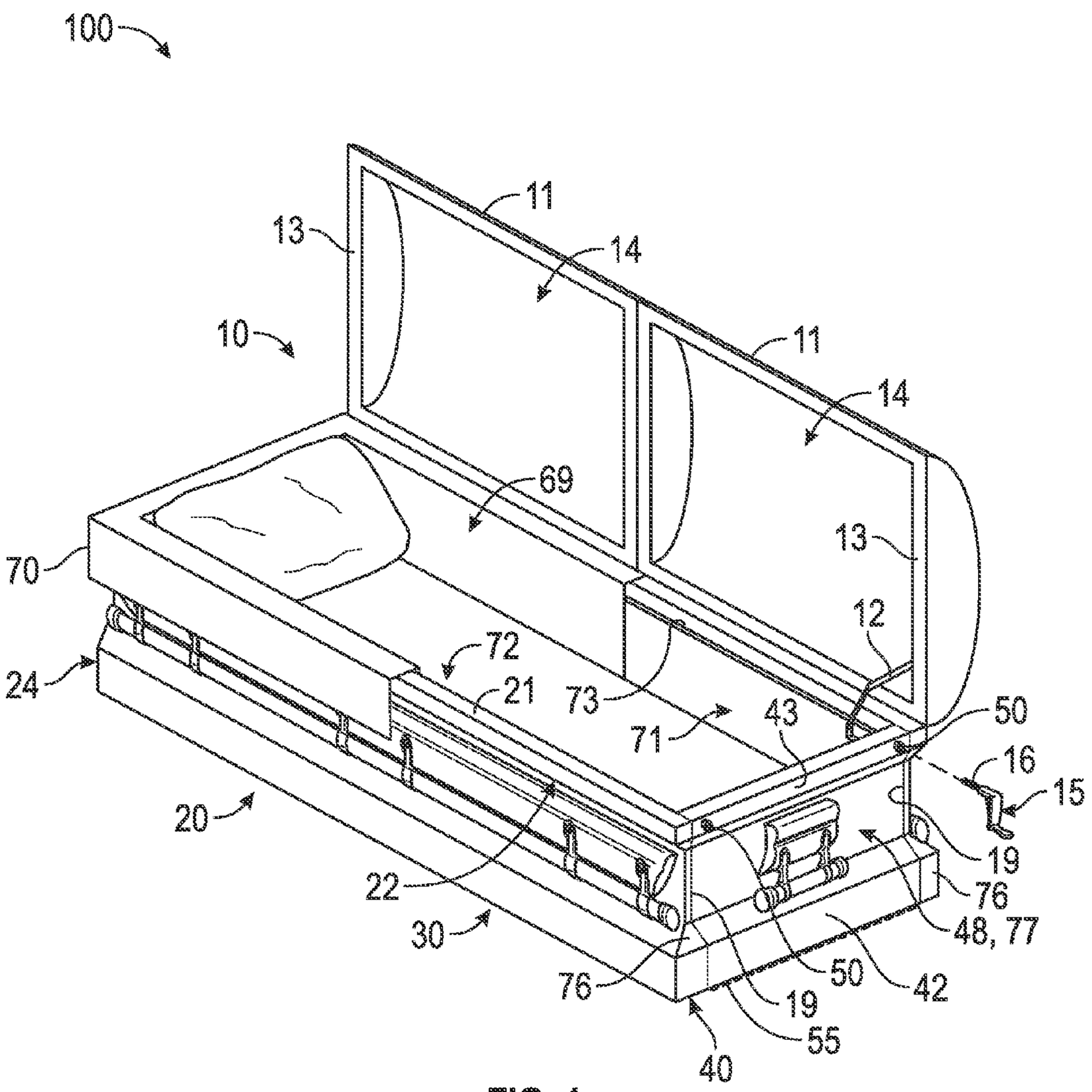

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FIG. 1

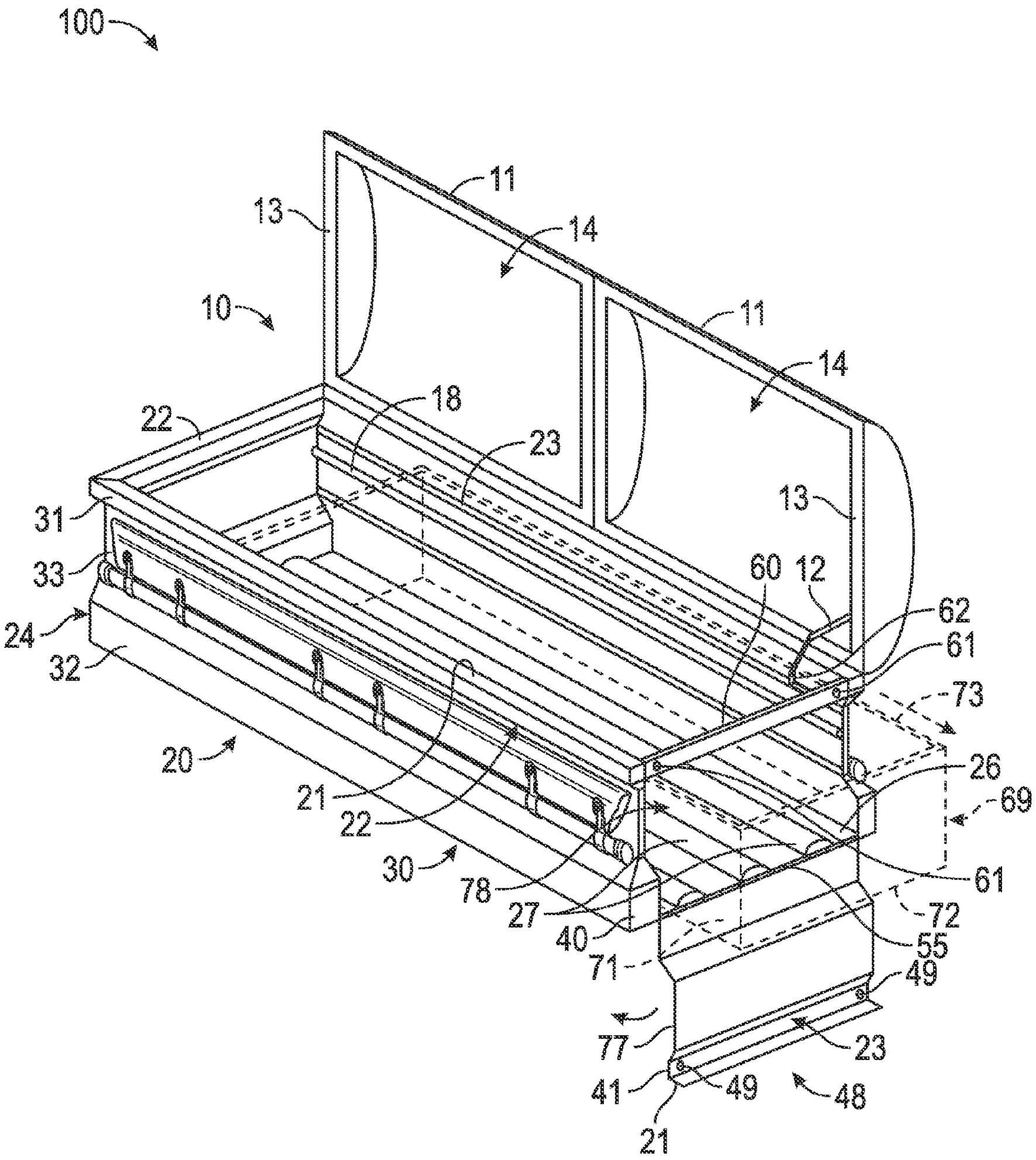
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FIG. 2

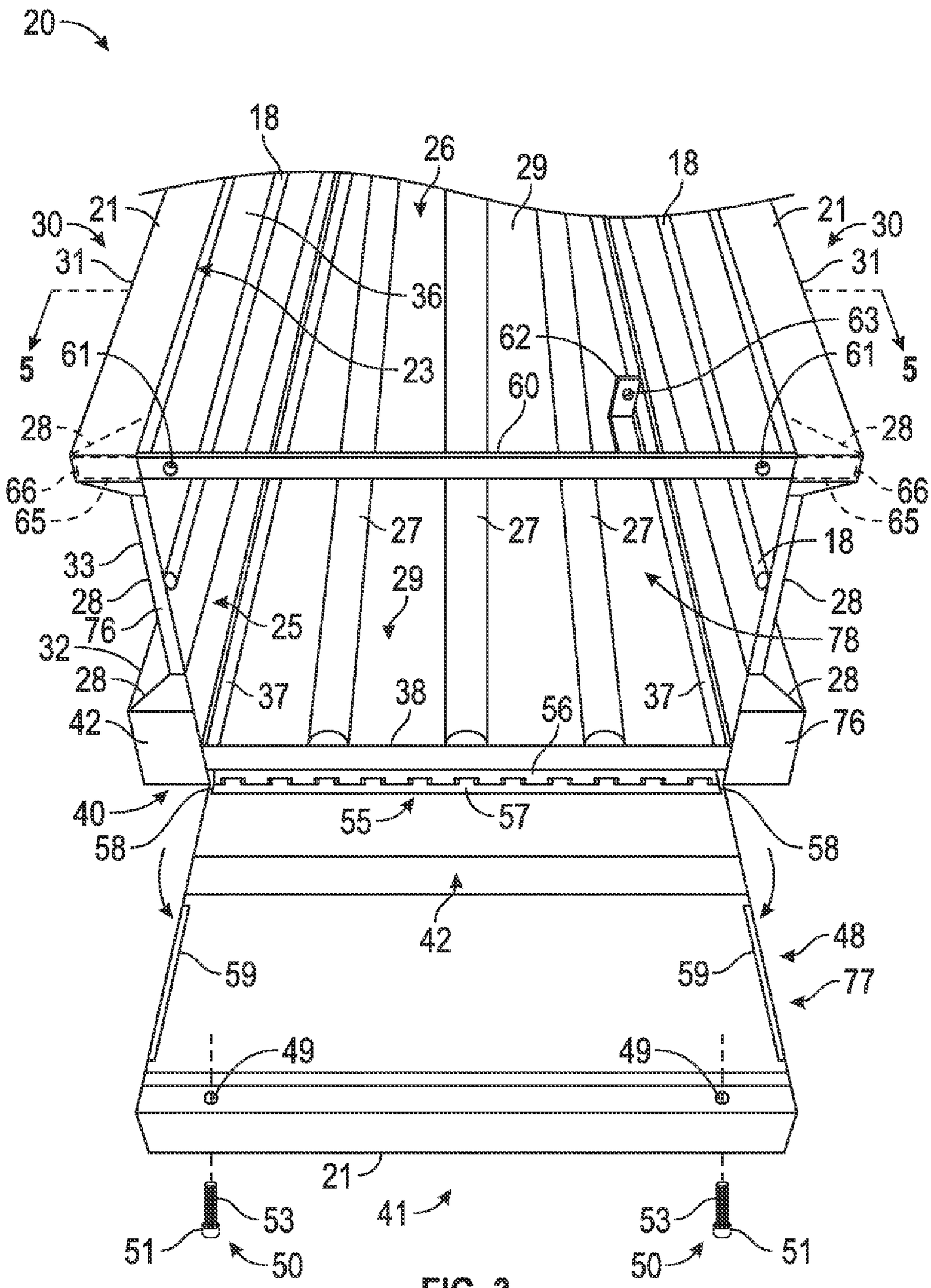
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FIG. 3

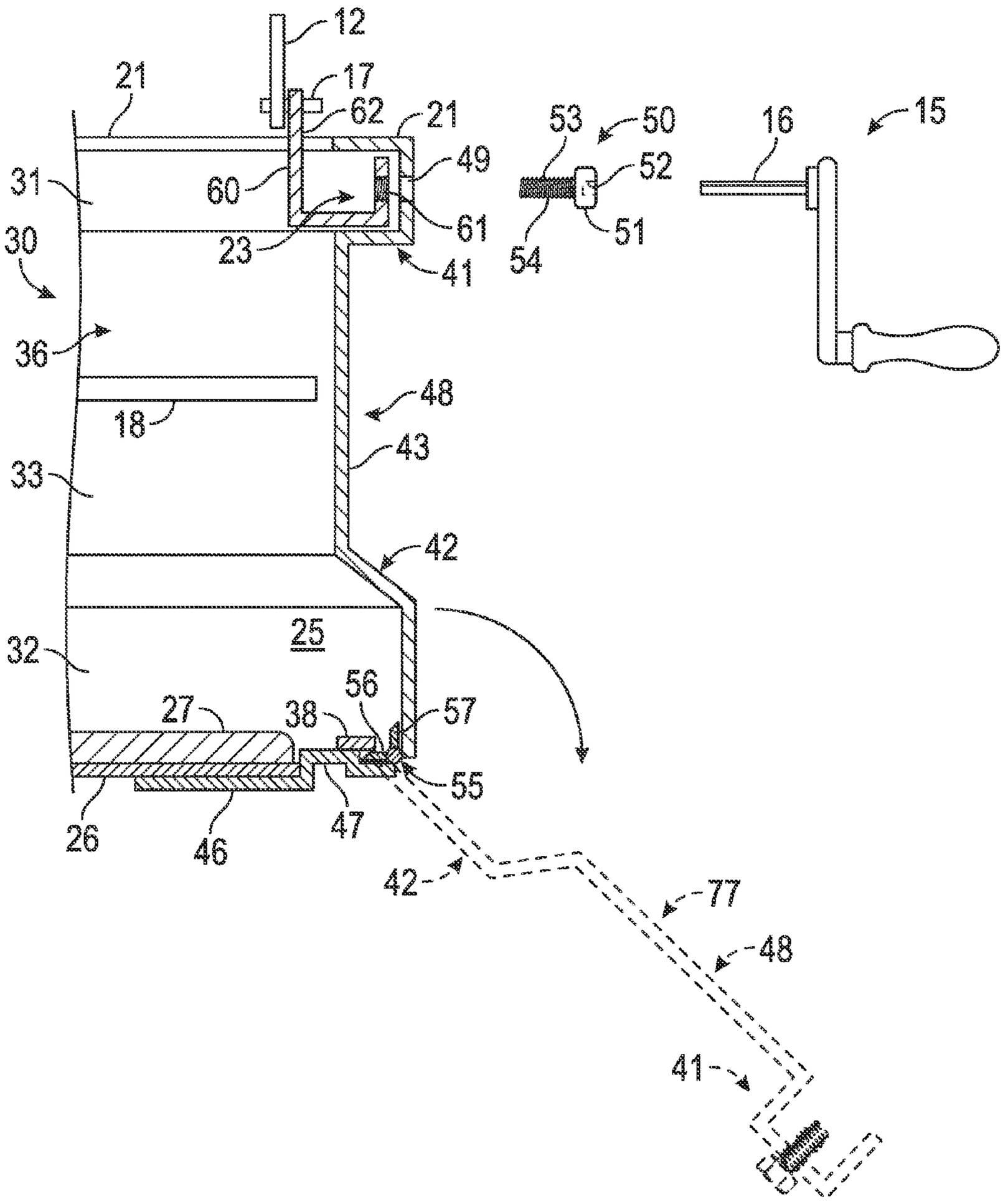
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FIG. 4

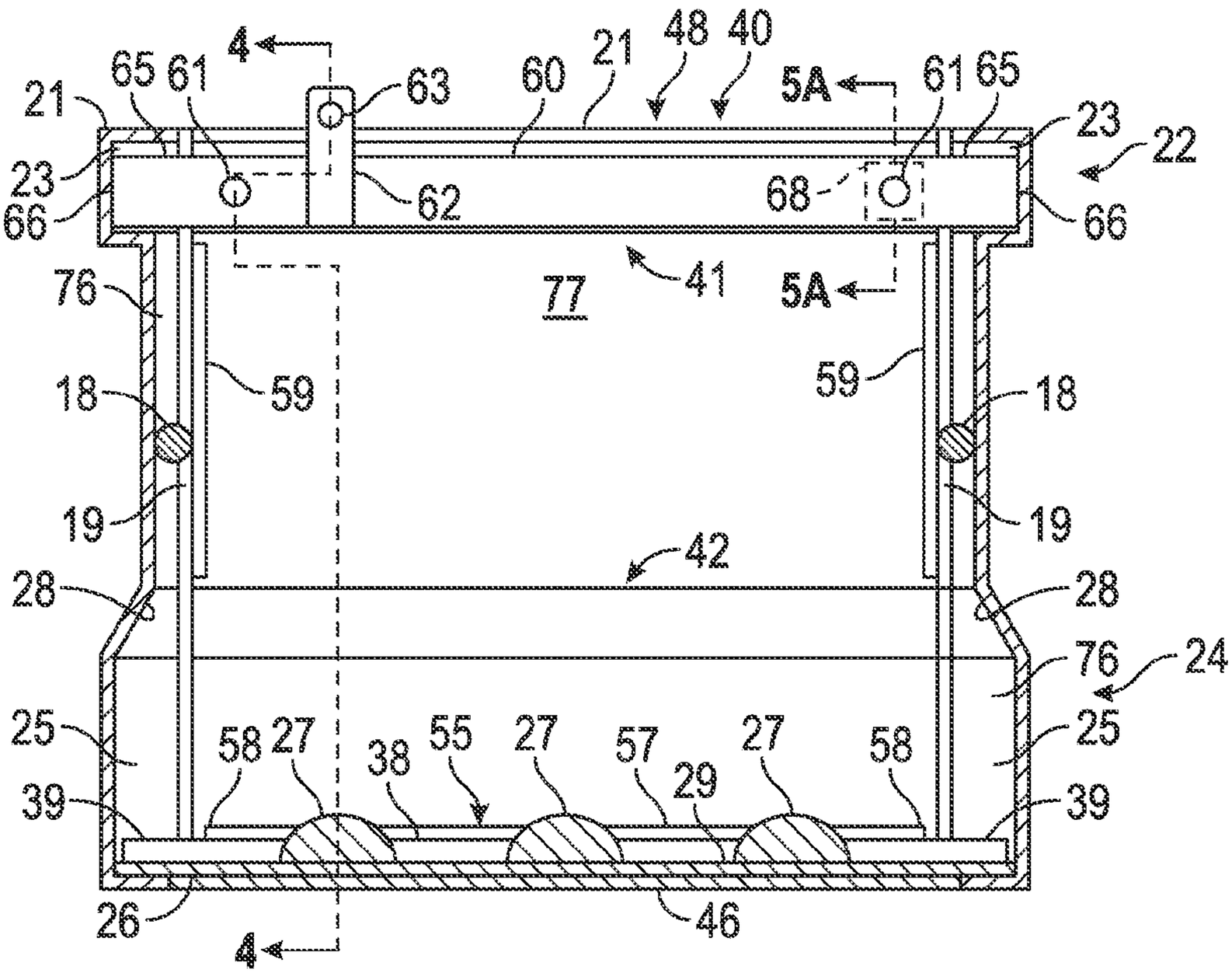


FIG. 5

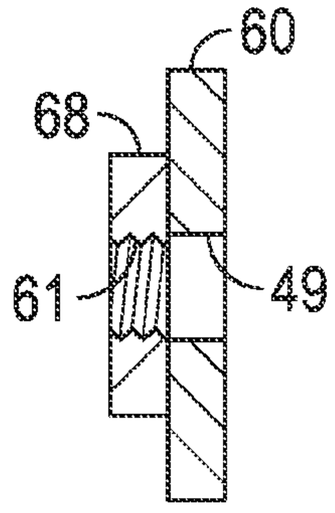


FIG. 5A

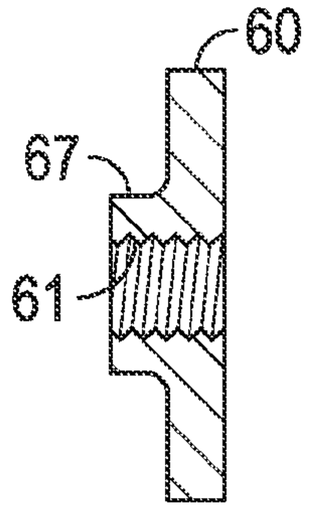


FIG. 5B

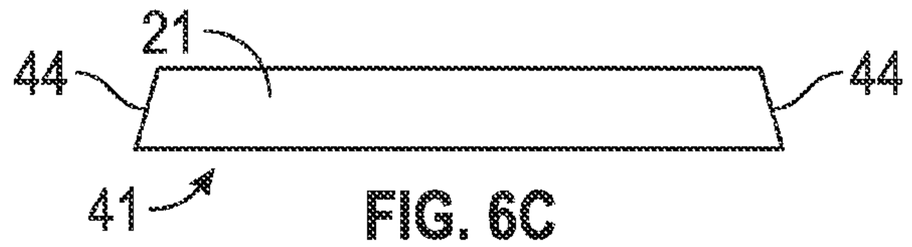


FIG. 6C

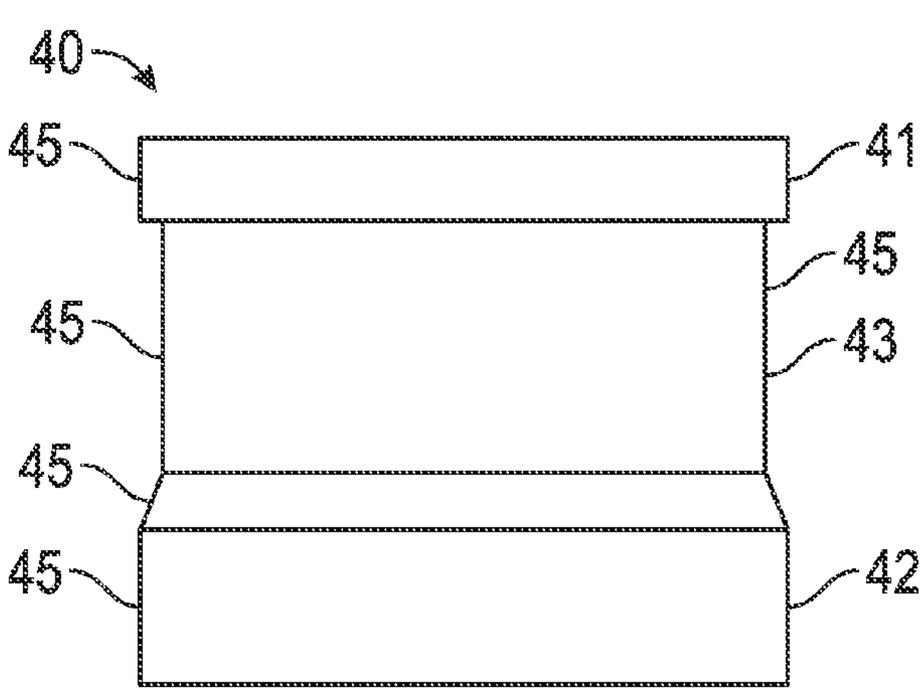
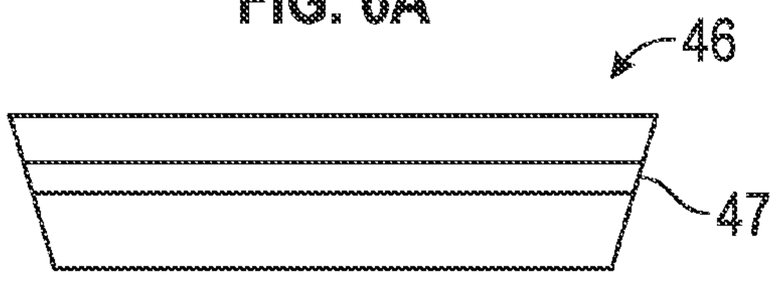


FIG. 6A



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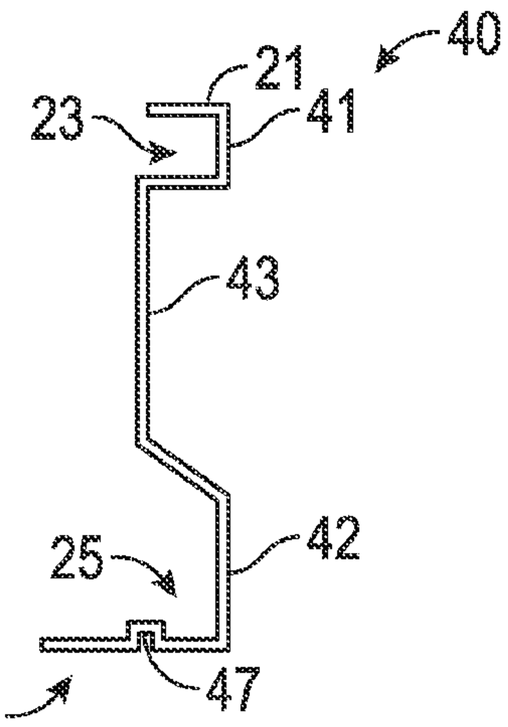

FIG. 6D

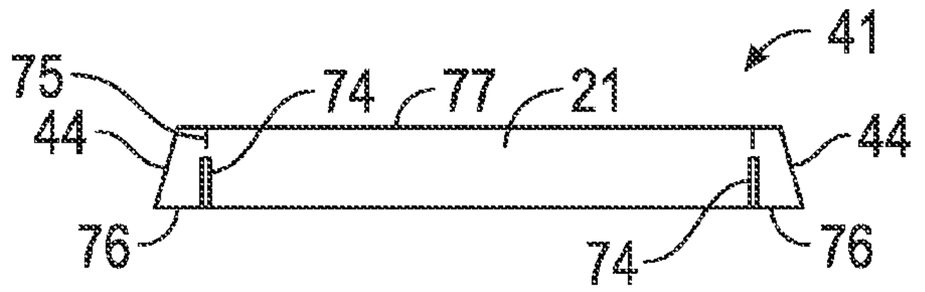

FIG. 7B

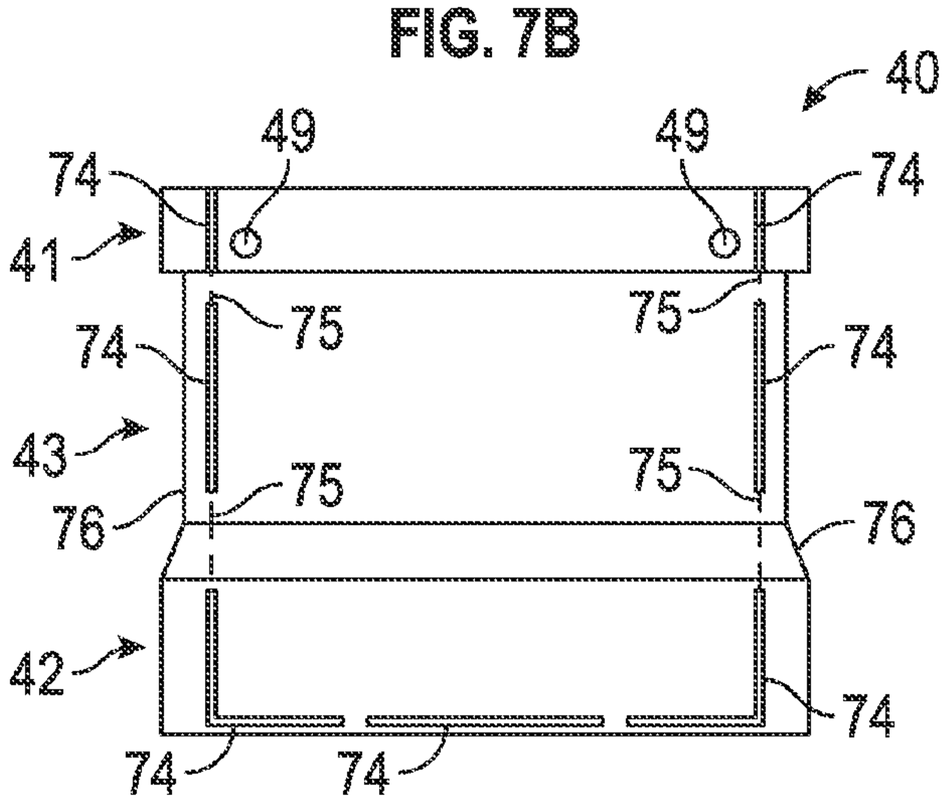

FIG. 7A

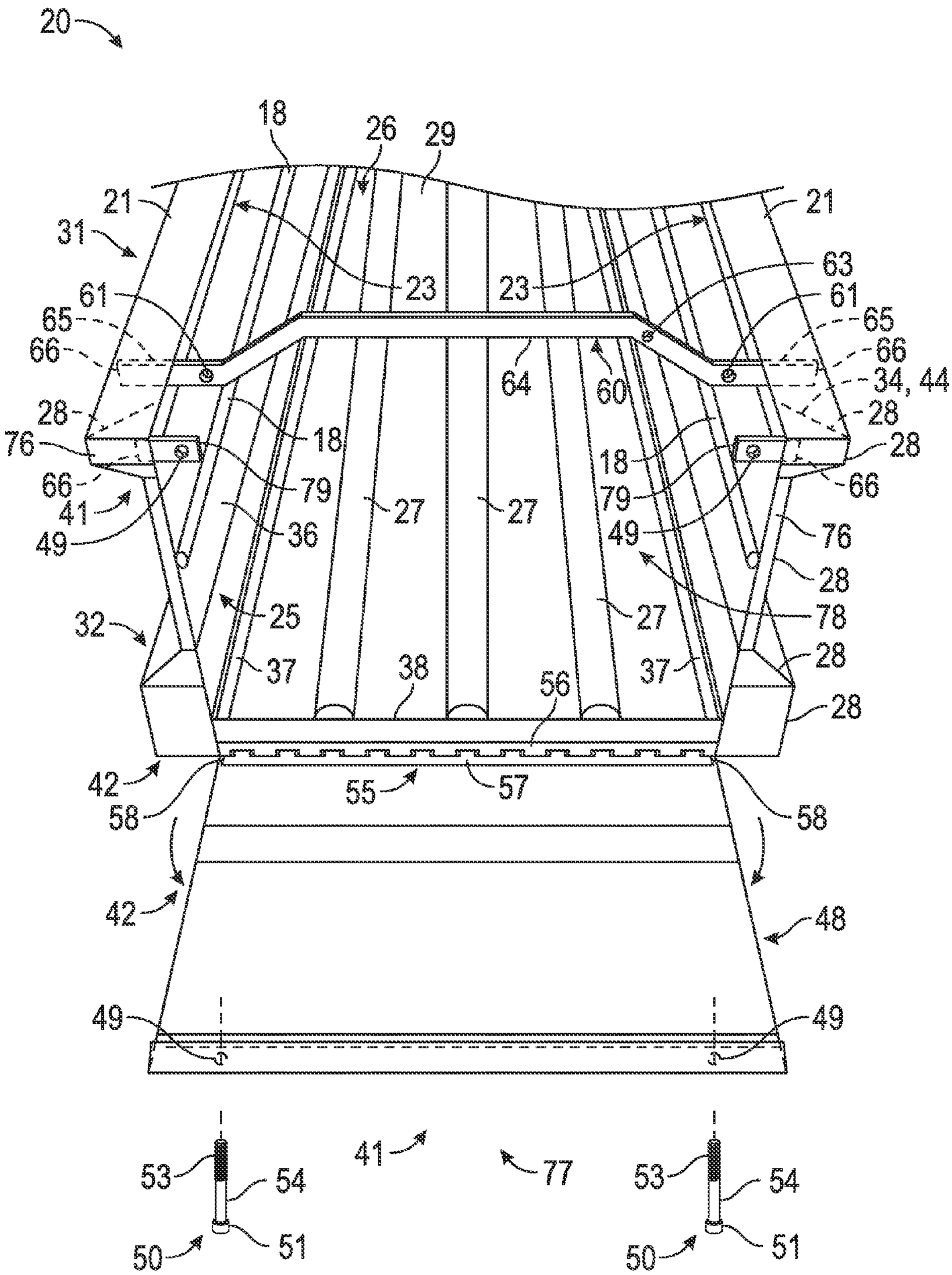
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FIG. 8

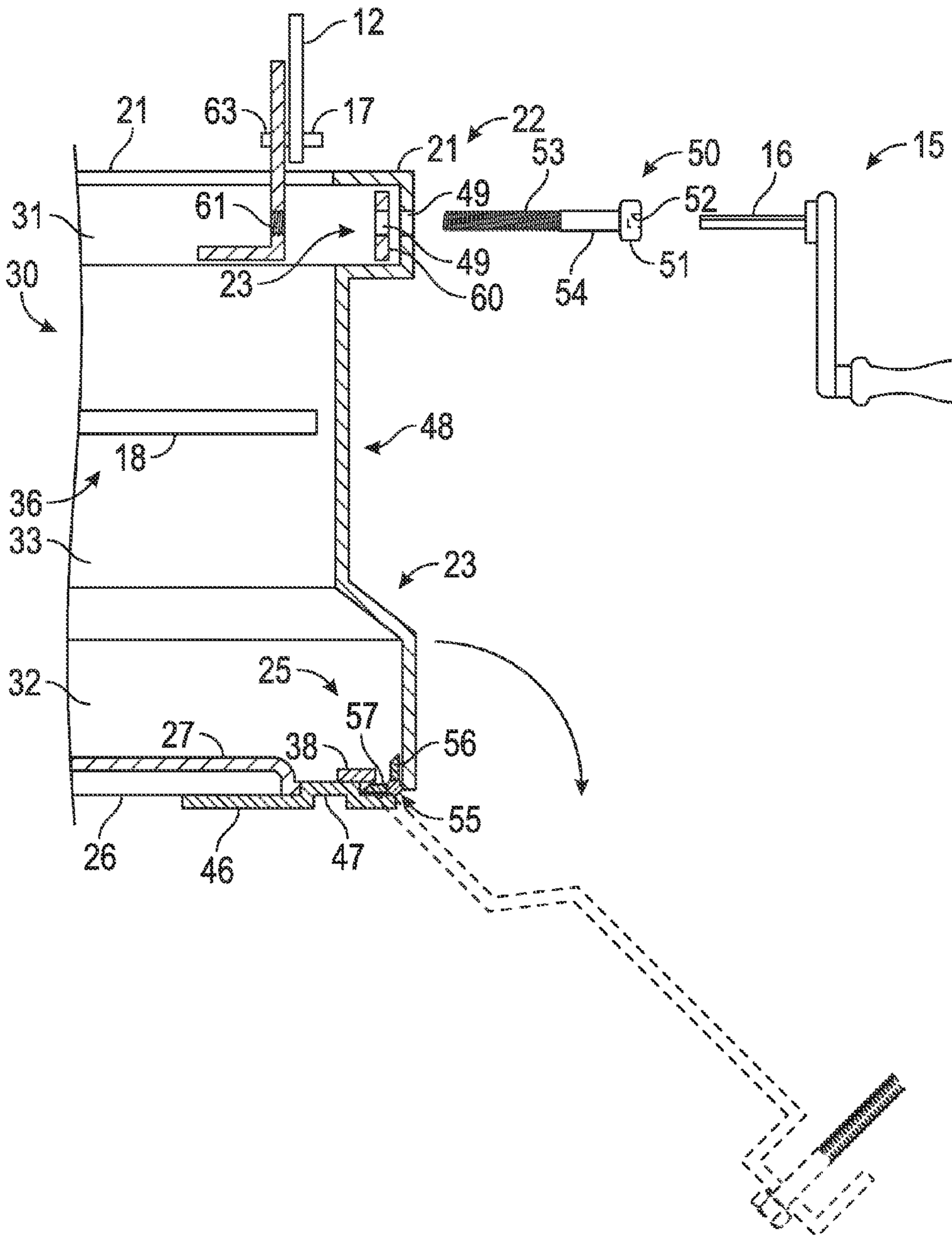
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FIG. 9

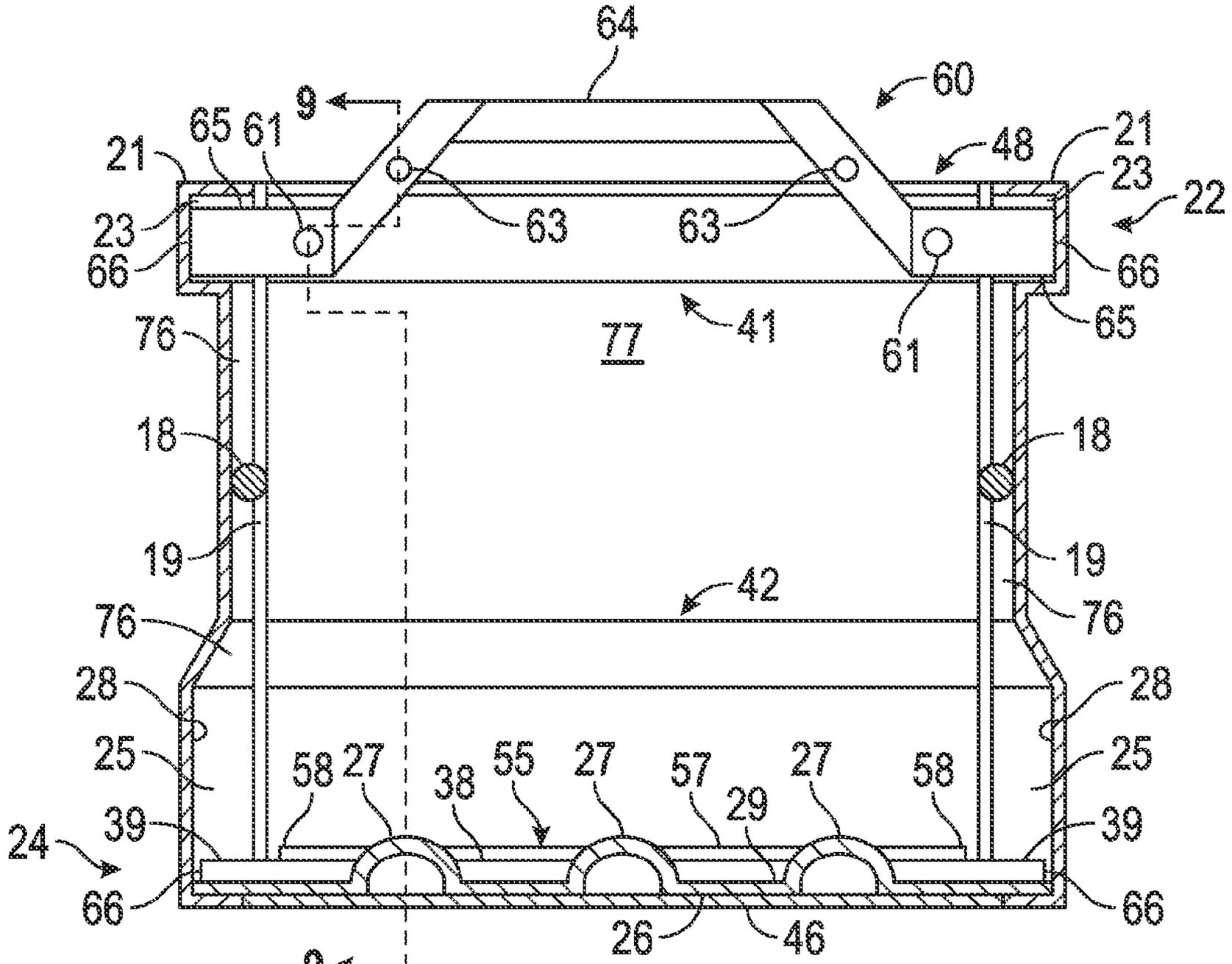
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FIG. 10

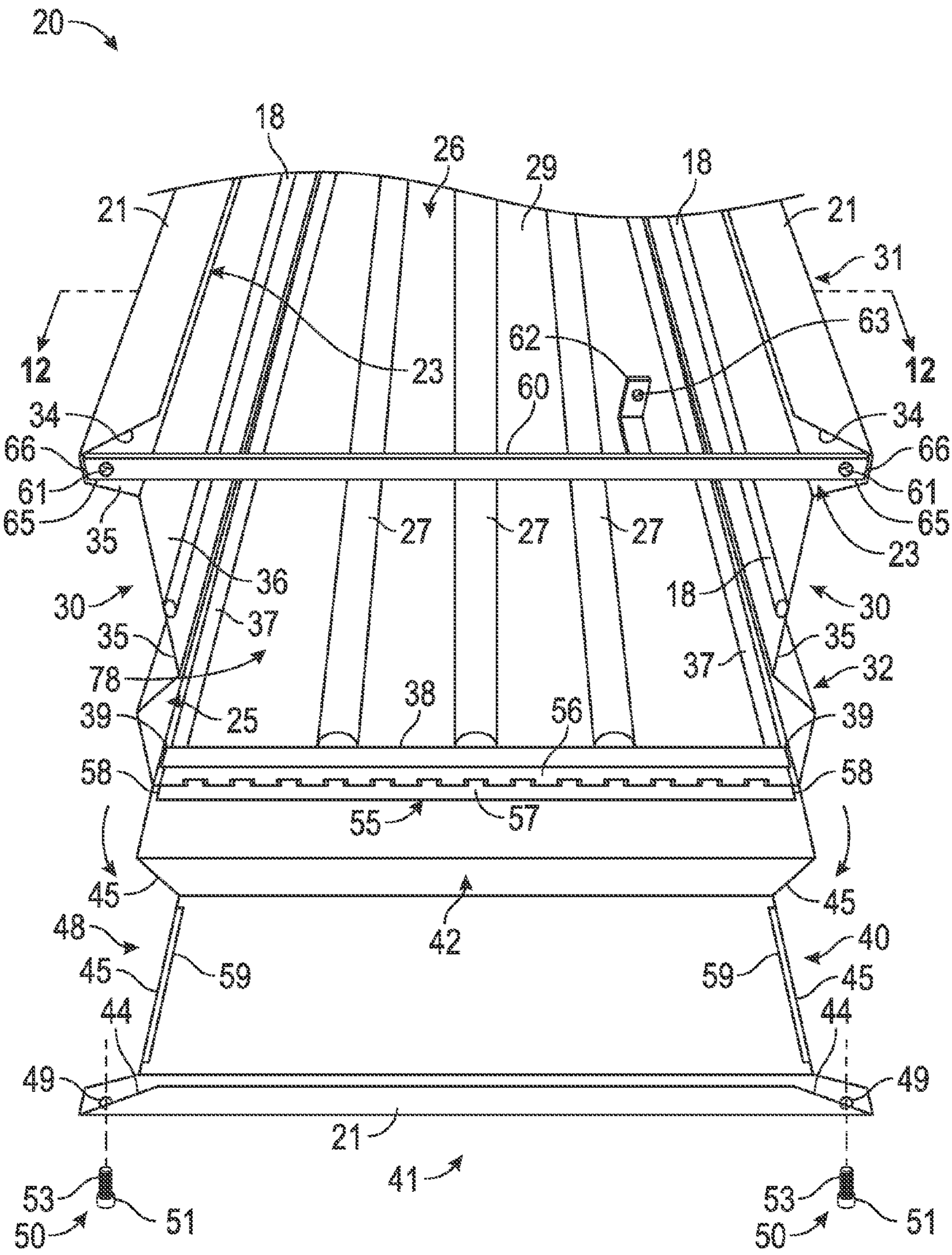
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FIG. 11

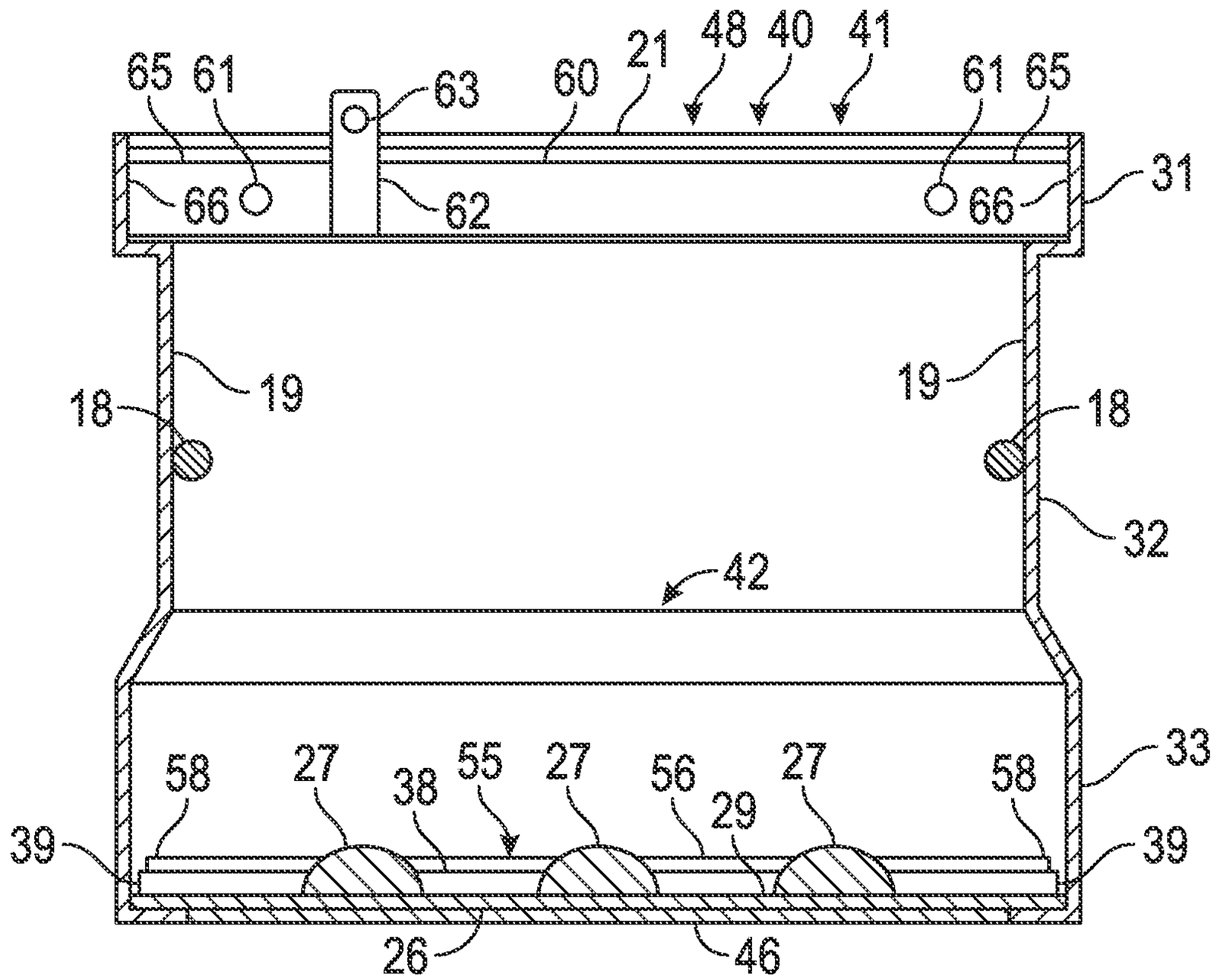
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FIG. 12

REUSABLE CASKET

TECHNICAL FIELD

The present disclosure relates to a casket assembly and more specifically to a reusable casket assembly, also known as a display casket or a rental casket.

CROSS-REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATIONS

This application claims the benefit of U.S. patent application Ser. No. 14/065,836 filed on Oct. 29, 2013, which is hereby incorporated by reference in its entirety.

BACKGROUND

Funeral costs are expensive and include the cost of preparing the body of the deceased, cost of a casket for presentation and/or burial of the deceased, final disposition costs such as cremation costs or interment costs including vault costs, burial costs, etc. The cost of the casket can vary significantly, depending on the types of materials and finishes used, the type of construction, the level of ornamentation, the interior finishing including panels, draping and lining, etc.

In some circumstances, a rental casket, which may also be referred to as a presentation casket, may be desired for temporary presentation of the deceased during visitation or a memorial service. For example, cremation is increasingly being used as an alternative to interment due to personal preference of the deceased or for budgetary reasons to avoid the costs of purchasing, opening and closing a vault and burial site. In such cases, a rental casket may be used temporarily to present the deceased during visitation or mourning. The deceased may be positioned on a removable tray or in a removable container for placement into the rental casket for presentation. The removable container may be, for example, a paperboard, wooden or other suitably flammable container which burns leaving little or no ash, such that the removable container may also be used as a cremation container. After presentation, the removable container including the deceased is removed from the rental casket for cremation. In another example, a rental casket having expensive finishes and ornamentation may be rented for presentation, and the deceased transferred from the rental casket to a less ornate and less expensive casket for permanent interment.

Wooden caskets having a side wall or floor which is removable to facilitate placement and removal of the removable tray or container in which the deceased is positioned into and from the wooden casket have been used as rental caskets. Metal caskets are generally perceived to be of higher quality in terms of aesthetics, strength, durability, etc., such that a metal casket is preferred or desired by a substantial majority for presentation of the deceased. The casket box of a traditional metal casket is fabricated from stamped metal panels which are welded together such that the floor and walls of the metal casket box have a unitary or continuous structure, and such that the casket box is only accessible through the top of the casket box. As such, insertion and subsequent removal after presentation of a tray or container including a deceased into a unitary metal casket box is cumbersome and presents the risk of dropping or disturbing the positioning of the deceased during movement of the tray or container into and out of the metal casket box, and substantially limits or prevents the use of a metal casket as a rental casket.

SUMMARY

A reusable metal casket including a metal casket box is provided. The reusable metal casket may also be referred to as a rental casket, and is configured to display a deceased body contained in a casket insert. The reusable metal casket may be rented for a limited period of time, for example, during visitation and/or funeral services, such that the reusable metal casket is used to temporarily hold the casket insert including the deceased body and for display of the deceased body in the casket insert. The casket insert may be configured as a cremation container such that the casket insert may be cremated with the deceased body, and/or may be configured for transfer to a vault for interment of the deceased. Metal caskets are preferred by 80% of the United States market, and are generally perceived to be of higher quality in terms of aesthetics, strength, durability, etc., such that a metal casket is preferred or desired by a substantial majority for presentation of the deceased. Further, metal caskets can be offered in a variety of metal types and finishes.

The casket box includes side, end and floor panels welded together to form the box structure. The casket box includes an opening in one end allowing longitudinal movement of a casket insert into and out of the casket box through the opening. The casket box includes a panel section rotatably attached to the casket box and movable between a closed position enclosing the opening and an open position allowing longitudinal movement of a casket insert into and out of the casket box through the opening. The casket box further includes a transverse member adjacent the panel section and connecting the opposing side panels such that the opening is partially defined by the transverse member.

A locking member configured to receive a casket key engages the panel section and an interface defined by the transverse member to retain the panel section to the transverse member in the closed position. The locking member may extend through an upper rail defined by the casket box. The upper rail defines an upper surface of the casket box and may further define an upper rail recess. In one example, the transverse member is a substantially straight bar which is positioned within the upper rail recess and attached such that it is flush with the upper surface. In another example, the transverse member includes an arched portion which extends vertically above the upper surface to increase the clearance between the transverse member and the top of the casket insert during movement of the casket insert into and out of the casket box through the opening. The arched transverse member may be attached to the side panels such that it is offset longitudinally from the panel section, and such that the arched portion of the transverse member is received into a lid cavity of a casket lid in a closed-casket position. The transverse member may include an attachment interface to receive a casket lid support, which may be a folding hinge such that the casket lid in the open-casket position is supported by the casket lid support attached to the transverse member.

One or more travel stops may be attached to the casket box and extend into the opening such that the travel stop is in contact with the panel section in the closed position to prevent the panel section from rotating inwardly into the interior space of the casket box. The panel section is rotatably attached to the casket box by a rotatable member, which may be configured as a continuous hinge. A reinforcement member extending the width of the casket box may be fixedly connected to the continuous hinge and the interior surface of the casket box adjacent the continuous hinge to reinforce the continuous hinge and/or to increase the strength and stability of the casket box in the transverse direction.

The casket box may include guides for assisting in the longitudinal movement of the casket insert into and out of the casket box through the opening. In one example, each side panel may include a longitudinal guide rod extending from an

inside surface of the side panel, which may be welded or otherwise fixedly attached to the side panel such that the guide rods are in contact with side walls of the casket insert during longitudinal movement of the casket insert into and out of the casket box. The floor panel of the casket box may include guide rails which protrude vertically upward from the floor surface to reduce the contact area between the bottom surface of the casket insert and the floor of the casket, to reduce the effort required to move the casket insert across the floor.

In one example, the end panel defining the opening includes lateral sections fixedly attached to the opposing side panels, where the panel section is intermediate the lateral sections and is moveable relative to the lateral sections. A clearance gap is defined between the panel section and each of the lateral sections, such that the panel section is freely moveable relative to the lateral sections without contact between the edges of the lateral and panel sections. Edge protectors may be affixed to the edges defining the clearance gap for appearance and/or to cushion movement of the panel section relative to the lateral sections. In another example, the panel section is coextensive with the upright portion of the end panel, such that the opening is defined in part by the side walls.

A method of making a reusable metal casket including a metal casket box as described herein is provided. The method includes attaching opposing side panels and opposing end panels to a floor panel to form a casket box, where one of the end panels includes a panel section moveably attached to the casket box such that the panel section is movable between a closed position enclosing an opening in the casket box and an open position allowing longitudinal movement of a casket insert into and out of the casket box through the opening. The method further includes attaching a transverse member to the opposing side panels adjacent the panel section such that the opening is partially defined by the transverse member. The side panels, end panels, floor panel, and panel section are made of metal and attached by welding.

The method may further include perforating one of the end panels to form a plurality of perforations defining the panel section, where the perforations are connected along a cut line by uncut material extending between the perforations along the cut line, and the panel section defined by the perforations is attached to the remaining portion of the end panel by the uncut material. The perforations may be formed by cutting, sawing, slitting, or other metal cutting means. In one example, the perforations are formed by laser cutting the plurality of perforations in the end panel. The method further includes removing the uncut material to separate the panel section from the end panel, where the panel section may be separated from the end panel after the end panel is welded to one of the floor panel and the opposing side panels.

The method further includes rotatably attaching the panel section to the casket box using a rotatable member such as a continuous hinge, by attaching a first hinge plate of a continuous hinge to the panel section and attaching a second hinge plate of a continuous hinge to the casket box such that the panel section is movably attached to the casket box to enclose the opening in the closed position. The method may include attaching a reinforcement member to the second hinge plate and to the casket box inner surface adjacent the second hinge plate, where the reinforcement member extends the width of the casket box and is attached by welding.

The above features and advantages, and other features and advantages, of the present invention are readily apparent from the following detailed description of some of the best modes and other embodiments for carrying out the invention, as defined in the appended claims, when taken in connection with the accompanying drawings.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

FIG. **1** is a schematic perspective view of a reusable casket system including a casket insert in display position in a casket including a moveable panel section shown in a closed position;

FIG. **2** is an schematic perspective view of the reusable casket system of FIG. **1** showing the moveable panel section in the open position;

FIG. **3** is a partial schematic perspective end view of a casket box of the casket of FIG. **1** with the moveable panel section in an open position;

FIG. **4** is a partial schematic cross-sectional and exploded view of section **4-4** of the casket box of FIG. **5** including a threaded interface, a locking bolt and a locking key;

FIG. **5** is a partial schematic cross-sectional view of section **5-5** of the casket box of FIG. **3** with the moveable panel section in the closed position;

FIG. **5**A is a schematic cross-sectional view of section **5**A-**5**A of FIG. **5** showing an alternate configuration of the threaded interface of FIG. **4**;

FIG. **5**B is a schematic cross-sectional view of section **5**A-**5**A of FIG. **5** showing another alternate configuration of the threaded interface of FIG. **5**;

FIGS. **6**A-**6**D are respectively front, bottom, top, and side views of the end panel of the casket box of FIG. **1** in an as formed condition;

FIGS. **7**A-**7**B are respectively front and top views of the end panel of FIGS. **6**A-**6**D after perforation of the end panel;

FIG. **8** is a partial schematic perspective end view of an alternate configuration of the casket box of the casket of FIG. **1** with the moveable panel section in an open position;

FIG. **9** is a partial schematic cross-sectional view of section **9-9** of the casket box of FIG. **10**;

FIG. **10** is a partial schematic cross-sectional end view of the interior of the casket box of FIG. **8** with the moveable panel section in the closed position;

FIG. **11** is a partial schematic perspective end view of another alternate configuration of the casket box of the casket of FIG. **1** with the moveable panel section in an open position; and

FIG. **12** is a partial schematic cross-sectional view of section **12-12** of the casket box of FIG. **11** with the moveable panel section in the closed position.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Referring to the drawings wherein like reference numbers represent like components throughout the several figures, the elements **50**, **68**, **79** shown in FIGS. **1-12** are not necessarily to scale or proportion. Accordingly, the particular dimensions and applications provided in the drawings presented herein are not to be considered limiting. A casket system generally indicated at **100** is shown in FIGS. **1** and **2**. The casket system **100** includes a reusable metal casket generally indicated at and a non-reusable (single use) casket insert generally indicated at **69** in FIG. **1** and shown in phantom in FIG. **2**. The reusable metal casket may also be referred to herein as a rental casket **10** or a display casket **10**. The casket insert **69** is configured to contain a deceased body (not shown) prepared for cremation or interment and positioned in the casket insert **69** for display or presentation during visitation, prior to interment or cremation. The casket insert **69** containing the deceased body is placed temporarily in the reusable casket **10**

for display or presentation of the deceased body, for example, during visitation or for a memorial service. The reusable casket **10** includes a metal casket box **20** configured to receive the casket insert **69**, with the deceased body contained therein, through an opening generally indicated at **78** in FIG. **2**. The opening **78** is defined by an end panel **40** of the casket box **20** and a transverse member **60** extending the width of the casket box **20** and connecting the side panels **30** of the casket box **20** adjacent the opening **78**. The end panel **40** includes a panel section generally indicated at **48** which is rotatably fastened to the casket box **20** such that the panel section **48** may be rotated away from the casket box **20** to an open position as shown in FIG. **2**. The opening **78** defined by the open panel section **48** and the transverse member **60** is of sufficient size (height and width) to receive the casket insert **69** into the casket box **20**. The transverse member **60** is fixedly connected to each of the side panels **30** of the casket box **20** adjacent the end panel **40** to reinforce and stabilize the casket box **20** when the panel section **48** is in the open position and during movement of the casket insert **69** in and out of the casket box **20** through the opening **78**, as shown in FIG. **2**. In the example shown, the casket insert **69** may be moved longitudinally, e.g., lengthwise, in and out of the casket box **20** by sliding the bottom **72** of the insert along the floor panel **26** of the casket box **20**. The transverse member **60** is configured and/or positioned such that a clearance is provided between the top surface **73** of the casket insert **69** and the transverse member **60** during movement of the casket insert **69** along the floor panel **26** of the casket box **20** and through the opening **78**.

The panel section **48** is rotated to a closed position shown in FIG. **1** and attached to the transverse member **60** during presentation of the deceased body in the reusable casket **10**, such that the casket exterior presents a continuous surface. The panel section **48** is retained to the transverse member **60** by locking members **50** configured to be attachable to the casket box **20** using a standard casket key **15**, also known as a casket crank **15**, shown in FIG. **1**. Following display, the movable panel is opened by detaching the locking members **50** using the casket key **15**, and the casket insert **69** is removed from the casket box **20** through the opening **78**. The removed casket insert **69** and the deceased body contained therein may then be cremated, transferred to another casket, and/or sealed in a vault (not shown) for interment.

Where relative terms such as "side," "end," "upper," "lower," "above," "below," "top," "bottom," "vertical," "horizontal," "longitudinal," "lengthwise," and "transverse" are used herein and in the claims, these terms are intended be relative to the orientation of the casket and/or casket in the display position and/or relative to the corpse in the display position. For example, the floor panel identified at **26** is a generally horizontal panel and defines the bottom of the casket **10**; the side panels of the casket **10** identified at **30** are located at the sides of the casket **10** and extend longitudinally, e.g., along the length of the casket **10** and vertically, e.g., upward, from the generally horizontal floor panel **26**; the end panels identified at **40** are located at the respective ends of the casket **10** and extend transversely, e.g., across the width of the casket **10**, and vertically, e.g., upward, from the generally horizontal floor panel **26**; the casket box **20** upper surface identified at **21** is at the top of the casket box **20**, etc. For example, the casket insert **69** is moved longitudinally or lengthwise into and out of the casket box **20** through the opening **78**. Where relative terms such as "equal," "parallel," and "perpendicular" are used herein and in the claims, these terms are intended be defined as "relative within the manufacturing variation and/or specification tolerances of the components contributing to the characteristics being described." For example, the transverse member indicated at **60** is described herein as connected to the side panels **30** such that the transverse member **60** is "perpendicular" to the side panels **30**, which extend the longitudinal length of the casket **10**. In the present example, the term "perpendicular" as used herein and in the claims is therefore defined as "equal within the manufacturing variation and/or specification tolerances of the components which are described as being perpendicular." As such, it would be understood that for the present example the transverse member **60** is perpendicular to the side panels **30** within the manufacturing tolerances of the transverse member **60**, the side panels **30**, and the attachment method, which include the flatness of the transverse member **60**, squareness of the side panels **30**, and variability in the weld attaching the transverse member **60** to the metal side panels **30**.

As shown in FIG. **1**, the casket insert **69** includes an insert bottom **72** and insert walls **71**. An insert liner **70** lines the interior of the casket insert **69** to cover the interior surfaces of the insert bottom **72** and insert walls **71**, and to provide an aesthetically pleasing surface upon which the corpse is positioned. The insert liner **70** may extend from the casket insert **69** over the insert top surface **73** of the insert **69** to cover the insert top surface **73**, which may be an unfinished surface. The insert liner **70** may include a pillow or head support and may drape over the side and/or end panels **30**, **40** of the casket **10** when the casket insert **69** is in display position, e.g., when at least one of the casket lids **11** is in an open-casket position as shown in FIG. **1**. By way of example, the casket liner **70** is made of a fabric which may be a polymer based or organic material, and may be decorated or trimmed to provide an aesthetically pleasing appearance.

The casket **10** includes at least one casket lid **11** configured to enclose the casket box **20**. In the example shown, the casket **10** includes two casket lids **11**, each attached to the casket box **20** such that the lids **11** are independently pivotable between a casket-open position (shown in FIG. **1**) and a casket-closed position (not shown). The casket lid **11** may be domed to define a lid cavity **14**, which may be configured to receive a lid insert (not shown). The lid insert is configured to fit into the lid cavity **14** to cover the inside surface of the casket lid **11** and may be, by way of non-limiting example, cloth covered to complement the insert liner **70**, and may be decorated, or may be functional including a shelf for receiving a flower vase, etc. The casket lid **11** includes a lid frame **13** which is configured to sealably interface with the upper surface **21** of the casket box **20** when the casket lid **11** is in the closed-casket position. The casket lid **11** may be supported in the open-casket position by a lid support **12**, which in the example shown may be a folding hinge attached at a first end to the casket lid **11** and operatively attached at the second end to the casket box **20**. In a non-limiting example shown in additional detail in FIGS. **3**, **4**, **8** and **9**, the lid support **12** may be pivotally attached via a pin **17** to an attachment interface **63** defined by the transverse member **60**, such that with the lid **11** in the closed-casket position, the lid support **12** is contained within the lid cavity **14**. In the example shown in FIGS. **3** and **4**, the attachment interface **63** may be defined by an attachment bracket **62** which is integral to the transverse member **60**.

Referring now to FIGS. **2-5**, the construction of the reusable metal casket box **20** is shown in additional detail. The casket box **20** includes opposing side panels **30**, opposing end panels **40**, and a floor panel **26**. Each of the side, end, and floor panels **30**, **40**, **26** are made of metal, and are stamped, bent, cut or otherwise formed to their respective net finished shapes prior to being welded together to form the casket box **20**. By

way of non-limiting example, the side, end and floor panels **30**, **40**, **26** may be stamped from metal sheet stock such as steel, stainless steel, bronze, or copper sheet stock. The sheet stock used to form the side, end, and floor panels **30**, **40**, **26** is of sufficient thickness (gauge) such that the casket box **20** formed therefrom is of adequate strength and durability to contain and transport the casket insert **69** and corpse. By way of non-limiting example, the side, end, and floor panels **30**, **40**, **26** may be formed from one of 16, 18, or 20 gauge stock.

The casket box **20** is formed by welding the side, end, and floor panels **30**, **40**, **26** together. Each of the side and end panels **30**, **40** is welded to the floor panel **26**, shown in additional detail in FIGS. **3**, **4** and **5**. The floor panel **26** may be configured as a generally horizontal panel and may further include a plurality of guide rails **27** protruding upwardly from the floor surface **29**, and extending longitudinally along the floor panel **26**. The guide rails **27** ease or facilitate movement of the casket insert **69** across the floor panel **26** of the casket box **20** by providing a reduced surface area with which the insert bottom **72** interfaces as the casket insert **69** is slidably moved in and out of the casket box **20** through the opening **78**. The guide rails **27** may be shaped as shown in FIGS. **3** and **5**, to have a hemi-spherical transverse cross-section. Other configurations and shapes of guide rails **27** may be used to provide a reduced surface area as compared with the floor surface **29**, to facilitate sliding movement of the casket insert **69** into and out of the casket box **20**. For example, the guide rails **27** may be shaped to have a semi-elliptical, semi-cylindrical, or polyhedral cross-section. The guide rails **27** may be fixedly attached to the floor surface **29**, for example, by welding or otherwise attaching or adhering each rail to the floor panel **26**. In a non-limiting example shown in FIGS. **9** and **10**, the guide rails **27** may be integrally formed in the floor panel **26** during stamping or press-forming of the floor panel **26**.

Each side panel **30** extends longitudinally the length of the casket box **20**, and is welded to a longitudinal edge of the floor panel **26** such that in the welded position the side panel **30** extends vertically upward from the generally horizontal floor panel **26**. Optionally, a longitudinal reinforcing rail **37** may be positioned as shown in FIG. **3** adjacent each longitudinal weld seam (not shown) joining the side panel **30** to the floor panel **26**, to further reinforce and/or strength the casket box **20** in the longitudinal direction. The longitudinal reinforcing rail **37** may be a metal bar made of the same metal as the floor and side panels **26**, **30** and/or of a metal which is weld-compatible with the metal of the floor and side panels **26**, **30** such that that reinforcing rail **37** may be attached by welding to one or both of the floor and side panels **26**, **30** adjacent the longitudinal weld seam **28**.

Each of the end and side panels **40**, **30** is net formed prior to welding. In the example shown, the metal end and side panels **40**, **30** may be stamped, bent, cut or otherwise formed from metal sheet stock to provide, by way of non-limiting example, the net finished shape of the end and side panels **40**, **30** shown in FIGS. **1-3**. "Net formed" and "net finished shape" as those terms are used herein, are intended to indicate the panels **26**, **30**, **40** are provided in a condition such that the only remaining fabricating required to obtain the final exterior shape of the casket box **20** is to weld the panels **26**, **30**, **40** together, and to smooth finish the welded seam by grinding and/or polishing the welded seam to remove any weld irregularities, weld spray, etc. Additional finishing, such as surface finishing, to obtain a surface texture or finish such as a painted, polished or brush finish, or attaching fixtures such as handles, decorative trim and/or ornamentation, locking hardware, seals, gaskets, etc., may be performed subsequent to welding the panels **26**, **30**, **40** together as these finishing operations do not affect the "net formed" or "net finished shape" of the panels **26**, **30**, **40** themselves. As compared to wooden caskets, metal caskets **10** may be formed in more ornate and complex shapes by stamping, bending, or otherwise forming the side and end panels **30**, **40** to define exterior profiles which may be difficult and more labor intensive to duplicate using wood-based materials. Further, duplicating such profiles in wood requires the use of relatively thicker sections of wood material to provide comparable strength to that of the same profile formed from metal sheet, which decreases the interior space of a wood casket compared to a metal casket having the same exterior profile, and which may also increase the weight of the wood casket as compared with a metal casket **10** having the same exterior profile. In the example shown in FIGS. **1-3**, the exterior profile of the casket box **20** includes an upper rail **22** defining an upper rail recess **23** and an upper surface **21**, and a lower railing **24** defining a lower rail recess **25**. Both the upper rail **22** and lower rail **24** are angled and mitered to join a generally vertical intermediate portion which is inset relative to the upper and lower rails **22**, **24**. The upper and lower rails **22**, **24** and upper and lower rail recesses **23**, **25** and angled and mitered surfaces are readily formed by stamping and/or bending metal sheets to form the side and end panels **30**, **40**. The side and end panels **30**, **40** are welded together such that the casket box **20** includes an upper rail **22** comprising the side and end upper rail portions **31**, **41**. The upper rail **22** defines an upper rail recess **23** and the upper surface **21** of the casket box **20**, against which the casket lid **11** frame interfaces and/or seals with the casket lid **11** in the closed-casket position.

Referring now to FIGS. **3**, **4** and **5**, the opposing side panels **30** may be formed as mirror image pairs to provide a left side panel **30** and a right side panel **30**. In the non-limiting example shown, each of the side panels **30** is net formed to include a side upper rail portion **31**, a side lower rail portion **32**, and a side intermediate portion **33** therebetween, as shown in FIGS. **2** and **3**. The side upper rail portion **31** and side lower rail portions **32** each extend laterally outward relative to the side intermediate portion **33** such that the side panel interior surfaces **36** of the side upper rail portion **31** and side lower rail portion **32** define, respectively, an upper rail recess **23** and a lower rail recess **25** in the interior space of the casket box **20**. The side upper rail portion **31** partially defines the upper surface **21** of the casket box **20**. The side panel **30** terminates longitudinally at each end at a side panel edge which is partially mitered to follow the contour of the side panel **30**, such that the side panel edge includes side vertical edge portions **35** and side mitered edge portions **34** as shown in FIG. **11**. As shown in FIGS. **2** and **3**, a guide rod **18** is attached to the side interior surface **36** of each of the side panels **30**, for example, by welding the guide rod **18** to the side panel **30**. The guide rod **18** extends the longitudinal length of the side panel **30**, and protrudes inwardly from the side panel **30** such that the insert walls **71** of the casket insert **69** are in continuous contact with the guide rods **18** as the casket insert **69** is moved into or out of the casket box **20**, to guide and center the casket insert **69** in the casket box **20**, to prevent interference of the casket insert **69** with the side interior surface **36** of the casket box **20**, to align the casket insert **69** longitudinally within the casket box **20**, and to prevent sideways movement of the casket insert **69** in the casket box **20**, for example, during transport of the casket. The guide rods **18**, in the example shown, are shaped as generally cylindrical rods. It would be understood that other configurations of guide rods **18** may be used which have a cross-sectional shape such that the guide rod **18** attached to the side wall protrudes or extends inwardly from the side interior surface **36** to provide a reduced surface

area relative to the side interior surface **36** to make contact with and guide the longitudinal movement of the casket insert **69** relative to the casket box **20**. For example, the guide rods **18** may be shaped similarly to the guide rails **27**, e.g., with a hemi-spherical cross-section, or may have a semi-cylindrical, semi-elliptical or polyhedral cross-section.

Referring to FIGS. **2**, **4** and **6**A-**6**D, the opposing end panels **40** may be formed as mirror image pairs to provide a head end panel **40** and a foot end panel **40**. In the non-limiting example shown, each of the end panels **40** is net formed to include an end upper rail portion **41**, an end lower rail portion **42**, and an end intermediate portion **43** therebetween, as shown in FIGS. **4** and **6**A-**6**D. The end upper rail portion **41** and end lower rail portions **42** each extend longitudinally outward relative to the end intermediate portion **43** such that the end panel **40** interior surfaces of the end upper rail portion **41** and end lower rail portion **42** define, respectively, an upper rail recess **23** and a lower rail recess **25** in the interior space of the casket box **20**. The end upper rail portion **41** partially defines the upper surface **21** of the casket box **20**. The end panel **40** terminates laterally at each end at an end panel edge which is partially mitered to follow the contour of the end panel **40**, such that the end panel edge includes end vertical edge portions **45** and end mitered edge portions **44**, as shown in FIGS. **6**A and **6**C.

The end panel **40** further includes a bottom portion **46** shown in FIGS. **4**, **5**, **6**B and **6**D, which extends horizontally from the end panel lower rail portion **42**. The end panel bottom portion **46** includes an integral channel **47** formed into the bottom portion **46**, which acts as a stiffening element **47** to strengthen and/or stabilize the end panel **40** and the casket box **20** laterally. The bottom portion **46** is welded to the floor panel **26** to attach the end panel **40** to the floor panel **26**. The mitered edge portions **44** of the bottom portion **46** of the end panel **40** are welded to the mating side panel miter edge portions **34** to join the bottom portion **46** of the end panel **40** to each of the side panels **30**.

At least one of the end panels **40** includes a movable panel section **48** which is rotatable between an open and closed position to define the opening **78** through which the casket insert **69** may be inserted into and removed from the casket box **20**. In the example shown in FIGS. **1**-**2** the foot end panel **40** includes the movable panel section **48**. It would be understood that the head end panel **40** could include the movable panel section **48**, or that both the head end panel **40** and the foot end panel **40** could be configured to include a movable panel section **48** as described herein, thereby providing openings **78** at each end of the casket box **20** through which the casket insert **69** could be moved into and out of the casket box **20**. As shown in FIG. **3**, the movable panel section **48** is rotatably attached at the transition from the end panel lower rail portion **42** to the end panel bottom portion **46**, such that the movable panel section **48** can be rotated from a closed position to an open position, where in the open position the movable panel section **48** is level with or vertically lower than the floor panel **26** (see FIG. **4**), such that the movable panel section **48** does not interfere with movement of the casket insert **69** into or out of the casket box **20**, and the weight of the casket insert **69** including the deceased body is not resting on the movable panel section **48** during movement of the casket insert **69**.

In the closed position, a clearance gap **19** is defined between the vertical edges of the movable panel section **48** and the adjacent portions of the casket box **20**, as shown in FIGS. **1** and **5**, to allow movement of the panel section **48** relative to the adjacent portions of the casket box **20**. Edge protectors **59**, as shown in FIGS. **3** and **5**, may be applied to the vertical edges of the panel section **48**, to preserve the finish on the vertical edges of the panel section **48** and/or to cushion the vertical edges of the panel to prevent inadvertent contact between or scuffing of the edges of the panel section **48** and adjacent portions of the casket box **20**, for example, during opening and closing of the panel section **48** or during movement of the casket box **20** with the panel section **48** in the closed position. The edge protectors **59**, by way of non-limiting example, may be made of a polymer or rubber based material and may be grooved to slip fit onto the edges of the panel section **48**. The edge protectors **59** may be finished to correspond to the color and/or finish of the metal panels **26**, **30**, **40** of the casket box **20**, or may be made of a clear polymer such that the edge protectors **59** are minimally visible on the movable panel. As shown in FIGS. **3** and **5**, the moveable panel is of sufficient width such that the opening **78** provided by the moveable panel in the open position is at least the width of the narrowest portion of the casket box **20** interior, which in the example shown in the transverse width between the guide rods **18**. As such, the opening **78** is sufficiently wide to receive a casket insert **69** having the maximum width which can fit between the guide rods **18**, e.g., a casket insert **69** of the maximum width which can be slidably inserted into the casket box **20**.

As shown in FIGS. **3** and **4**, the panel section **48** is rotatably attached to the bottom portion **46** of the end panel **40** and operatively connected to the floor panel **26** of the casket box **20** via a rotatable member generally indicated at **55**. The rotatable member **55** may be, for example, a metal piano hinge **55** or metal continuous hinge **55** including first and second hinge plates **56**, **57** which are rotatable relative to each other to define an angle of at least 180 degrees therebetween. In the example shown, the first hinge plate **56** is rotatable to 270 degrees from the second hinge plate **57**, such that with the first hinge section operatively attached to the floor panel **26** and the second hinge plate **57** attached to the panel section **48**, the panel section **48** in the open position is rotatable more than 180 degrees from the floor panel **26** in the direction of the arrows shown in FIGS. **3** and **4**, and as shown in FIG. **4**. The continuous hinge **55** extends the width of the panel section **48** such that each end **58** of the continuous hinge **55** extends to the edge of the panel section **48** and substantially to the perimeter of the opening **78** to provide support to the panel section **48** substantially across the entire transverse width of the panel section **48**, as shown in FIGS. **3** and **5**. The continuous hinge **55** is fixedly attached to the bottom portion **46** of the end panel **40**, for example, by welding the first hinge plate **56** to the bottom portion **46** of the end panel **40**. The second hinge plate **57** is fixedly attached to the panel section **48**, for example, by welding the second hinge plate **57** to the panel section **48** to rotatably attach the panel section **48** to the casket box **20**. As shown in FIGS. **3**-**5**, a metal reinforcement member **38** overlaps the first hinge plate **56** and is fixedly attached to the casket box **20**, for example, by welding the reinforcement member **38** to the first hinge plate **56** and to the bottom portion **46** of the end panel **40** adjacent the first hinge plate **56** to reinforce the continuous hinge **55** and the attachment of the first hinge plate **56** to the bottom portion **46** of the end panel **40**. The reinforcement member **38** extends the width of the floor panel **26**, as shown in FIG. **5** in an interior view of the end of the casket box **20**, and is fixedly attached to the casket box **20** across the transverse width of the casket box **20**, for example, by welding the end portions **39** of the reinforcement member **38** to the side panels **30** at weld attachment points **66**. The reinforcement member **38** welded to the casket box **20** across the transverse width of the casket box **20** reinforces the casket box **20** and the opening **78** in the transverse direction,

for example, during movement of the casket insert **69** into and out of the casket box **20** through the opening **78**. As shown in FIG. **4** in one example, the first hinge plate **56** may be positioned to abut or be adjacent to the integral channel **47** extending the width of the bottom portion **46** of the end panel **40**, and the reinforcement member **38** may be positioned to overlap and be welded to both the first hinge plate **56** and the integral channel **47** to reinforce the hinge plate and casket box **20** across the width of the opening **78** and across the width of the casket box **20**. The reinforcement member **38** may be, for example, configured as one of a metal bar, a metal plate, or a metal rod.

As shown in FIGS. **2-5**, the panel section **48** includes at least one through hole **49** configured to receive the locking element **50** which is used to attach the panel section **48** to the casket box **20** in the closed position, and specifically, to attach the panel section **48** to the transverse member **60** extending across the top of the opening **78** and connecting the upper rail portions **31** of the side panels **30**. In the example shown, the panel section **48** includes two through holes **49** located in the upper rail **22** portion of the panel section **48**. The through holes **49** are located adjacent the vertical edges of the panel section **48** such that the panel section **48** is attached to the transverse member **60** adjacent the clearance gaps **19** defined between the panel section **48** and the portions of the casket box **20** adjacent the panel section **48**, and such that the panel section **48** is flush to the end panel **40** in the closed position.

In a first example configuration shown in FIG. **1** through, the transverse member **60** is configured as a flat bar which extends across the top of the opening **78** and is attached at either end **65** of the transverse member **60** to the side upper rail portion **31** such that the side panels **30** are connected by the transverse member **60**. The transverse member **60** may also be referred to herein as a cross bar **60**, or bracing bar **60**. In the example shown, the transverse member **60** is made of metal and defines opposing ends **65** of the transverse member **60**. Each transverse member end **65** is positioned in a respective side panel **30** upper rail recess **23** of the opposing side panels **30** and is welded to the side interior surface **36** of the side panel **30** at a weld attachment point indicated at **66**, such that the transverse member **60** connects the opposing side panels **30** and reinforces the casket box **20** and the opening **78** in the transverse direction. The transverse member **60** is connected to the side panels **30** such that the transverse member **60** is perpendicular to the side panels **30**, and parallel to the floor surface **29** and the reinforcement member **38**, such that the transverse member **60**, side panels **30**, floor panel **26**, and reinforcement member **38** cooperate to establish and stabilize the squareness of the casket box **20** and opening **78**, to maintain alignment of the panel section **48** to the opening **78** over time and after repeated use of the rental casket **10**, e.g., after repeatedly moving multiple casket inserts **69** into and out of the casket box **20** over time.

The transverse member **60** may include, as described previously, an attachment bracket **62** including an attachment interface **63** to attach a lid support **12**. The attachment bracket **62** may be integral to the transverse member **60**, for example, the attachment bracket **62** may be formed during stamping or blanking of the transverse member **60**, or may be fixedly attached to the transverse member **60**, for example, by welding, riveting, bolting, etc. In a non-limiting example, the lid support **12** may be rotatably attached to the attachment interface **63** via a pin **17**, as shown in FIG. **4**, or may be clipped, welded, or otherwise attached to the attachment interface **63** such that the lid support **12** is operable to support the casket lid **11** in an casket-open position and to be folded or otherwise collapsed or when the casket lid **11** is in the casket-closed position.

The example of a transverse member **60** made of metal is not intended to be limiting, and it would be understood that the transverse member **60** may be made of other materials, including non-metal and/or metal reinforced materials, having sufficient strength and stability to reinforce the casket box **20** and/or opening **78** in the transverse direction when fixedly attached to the opposing side panels **30**. For example, the transverse member **60** may be made of a high strength polymer which may be reinforced with a metal insert and/or strengthening fibers. The transverse member **60** may be attached to the side panels **30** by methods other than welding, for example, the transverse member **60** may be attached to clips or brackets (not shown) affixed to the side interior surface **36** of the side panels **30** to configured to receive and fixedly attach the transverse member **60** to the side panel **30** by attachment means which may include, but are not limited to welding, soldering, press-fitting, fastening by rivets, bolts, clips or other fasteners, etc.

In the example shown in FIGS. **1-5**, the transverse member **60** includes one or more locking member interfaces **61** each configured to receive and attach a locking member **50**, and located to correspond to and align with a through hole **49** in the panel section **48** when the panel section **48** is in a closed position, such that a locking member **50** inserted through the through hole **49** of the panel section **48** can engage the corresponding locking member interface **61**. The locking member interface **61** may be a threaded hole defined by, e.g., formed in, the transverse member **60** and extending through the thickness of the transverse member **60**, as shown in FIG. **4**, and may be referred to herein as a threaded interface **61**. The example is non-limiting, and other configurations of the locking member interface **61** may be used. For example, as shown in FIGS. **5** and **5**A, the transverse member **60** may define a through hole **49**, and may further include a threaded element **68**, such as a threaded block, a threaded sleeve, or a nut, which may be attached to the transverse member **60** in alignment with the through hole **49**, such that the locking member **50** can be received through the through hole **49** and engaged to the locking member **50**. The threaded element **68** can be attached to the transverse member **60**, for example, by welding, brazing, clipping or otherwise adhering or fastening the threaded element **68** to the transverse member **60**. In another example shown in FIG. **5**B, the transverse member **60** may be formed to include a flanged portion **67** which defines the threaded interface **61**, to extend the number of threads and the threaded length longer than that which can be provided by the thickness of the transverse member **60**. Not shown but understood, the receiving side of the threaded interface **61** may be chamfered to guide the locking member **50** into engagement with the threads of the threaded interface **61**.

The locking member **50** may be a bolt **50** or other threaded fastener which may be driven or fastened using a standard casket key **15**. In the example shown, the locking member **50** is a recessed head bolt **50** having a bolt head **51** defining a bolt head recess **52** corresponding to a driver segment **16** of the casket key **15**. The driver segment **16** and the bolt head recess **52** may both define a hexagon cross-section, such that the hexagonal driver segment **16** can be received into the hexagon bolt head recess **52** to drive, e.g., rotate and thread the locking member **50** into the threaded interface **61**. In one example, the driver segment **16** is a 5/16 inch hexagonal driver and the bolt **50** recess is configured to be driven by a 5/16 inch hexagonal driver. The bolt **50** includes a bolt shank **53** which is threaded such that the bolt threads **54** correspond to, e.g., can be thread-

ably engaged with, the threads of the threaded interface **61**. The bolt shank **53** and bolt threads **54** are of sufficient length such that the bolt threads **54** can engage with the threaded interface **61** when the bolt head **51** is in contact with the exterior surface of the panel section **48** in an installed position. The lockable member may be finished and/or configured to match or complement the exterior finish and/or exterior color of the casket box **20**.

As shown in FIGS. **1-4**, the panel section **48** can be rotated via the rotatable element, which in the example shown is a continuous hinge **55**, to a closed position, and the lockable member inserted through the through hole **49** in the panel section **48** to engage the threaded interface **61** of the transverse member **60** to retain the panel section **48** in the closed position. The lockable member can be engaged with the threaded interface **61** using the casket key **15** to drive the lockable member. The through hole **49** in the panel section **48** and the threaded interface **61** are aligned such that the panel section **48** in the closed position is substantially in alignment and substantially flush with the casket box surfaces adjacent the panel section **48** to provide an aesthetically pleasing exterior appearance of the casket box **20**. For example, in the example shown in FIGS. **1-5**, the movable panel section **48** is defined by a central section **77** of the end panel **40** which is between and adjacent to lateral sections **76** of the end panel **40**. As will be described in further detail herein, the movable panel section **48** in this example may be cut from the end panel **40** during fabrication of the casket to optimize fit and alignment of the movable panel section **48** to the opening **78** in the closed position. In the closed position and retained by the locking members **50** engaged to the transverse member **60** in the installed position, the panel section **48** is aligned relative to the adjacent lateral sections **76** of the end panel **40** such that the exterior surface of the panel section **48** is substantially flush with the adjacent exterior surface of the lateral sections **76** of the end panel **40**. Further, the panel section **48** in the installed position is engaged to the transverse member **60** such that the clearance gaps **19** between the closed panel section **48** and the adjacent lateral sections **76** (see FIG. **5**) are uniform in width along the vertical length of each clearance gap **19**, to provide an aesthetically pleasing appearance and to prevent interference of the panel section **48** with the adjacent lateral sections **76** during opening and closing, and/or to avoid contact between and/or scuffing of the edges of the panel section **48** and lateral sections **76** defining the clearance gaps **19**.

In another example shown in FIGS. **8-10**, the transverse member **60** may be arched to increase the clearance between the transverse member **60** and the insert top surface **73** during movement of a casket insert **69** into and out of the casket box **20**. As shown in FIGS. **8-10**, the transverse member **60** may include an arched portion **64** which may be integral to the transverse member **60**. In one example, the arched transverse member **60** may be stamped or blanked from metal sheet stock. In another example, the arched transverse member **60** may be formed by welding metal segments together to form the transverse member **60** including the arched portion **64**. The arched transverse member **60** may be fixedly attached to the opposing side panels **30** as shown in FIGS. **8** and **9**, such that the transverse member **60** is offset longitudinally inboard from the end panel **40** and/or end of the casket box **20**, and such that with the casket lid **11** in the closed-casket position the arched portion **64** of the transverse member **60** extends into the lid cavity **14**, so as not to interfere with the casket lid **11** and to allow for full closure and/or sealing of the casket lid **11** against the upper surface **21** of the casket box **20**. The transverse member ends **65** may be located in the upper rail **22** recessed and welded to the side interior surfaces **36** at weld attachment points **66**, such that the arched transverse member **60** is located substantially perpendicular to the side panels **30** and parallel to the opening **78**. In the example shown, the arched portion **64** includes an attachment interface **63** for attaching the lid support **12**.

In the example shown in FIGS. **8-10**, travel stops **79** are fixedly attached to the lateral sections **76** of the end panel **40** and extend from the upper rail recess **23** into the opening **78**. The panel section **48** in the closed position contacts the travel stops **79**, which prevent inward movement of the panel section **48** into the interior area of the casket box **20**. The panel section **48** is retained against the travel stops **79** in a generally vertical position to align the panel section **48** such that it is flush with the adjacent lateral sections **76** of the end panel **40** in the closed position. Each of the travel stops **79** defines a through hole **49** and is positioned relative to the lateral sections **76** of the end panel **40** and relative to the transverse member **60** such that each through hole **49** of the travel stop **79** is in alignment with a respective corresponding through hole **49** of the panel section **48** and threaded interface **61** defined by the arched transverse member **60**. The panel section **48** is retained to the casket box **20** in the closed position by locking members **50** which are of sufficient length as shown in FIG. **9** to extend through the through hole **49** of the panel section **48** and the through hole **49** of the travel stop **79** to engage the threaded interface **61** of the transverse member **60**.

The example shown in non-limiting, and other configurations of travel stops **79** may be used. For example, the travel stop **79** may be configured to extend sufficiently into the opening **78** to prevent inward movement of the panel section **48** into the interior area of the casket box **20**, but not interfere with passage of the locking member **50** through the through hole **49** of the panel section **48** to the threaded interface **61** of the transverse member **60**. For example, the travel stops **79** may each be configured as tabs attached to the lateral sections **76** which extend into the opening **78** to interfere with the panel section **48** without interfering with the locking member **50**. The tabs **79** may be metallic or non-metallic, and may be attached to the lateral sections **76**, for example, by welding, soldering, by an adhesive, or by a fastener such as a clip. In another example, a thin rod, cable or wire may be extended across the top of the opening **78** and attached to upper rail portions **41** of the lateral sections **76** such that the cable, for example, interferes with inward movement of the panel section **48** into the interior area of the casket box **20**, while providing clearance for passage of the locking members **50** through the through holes **49** of the panel section **48** to the threaded interfaces **61** of the arched transverse member **60**, and while providing clearance for the movement of the casket insert **69** into and out of the casket box **20** through the opening **78**. Additionally, the travel stop **79** configured as a cable or similar element extending transversely across the opening **78** may be fixedly attached to the panel section **48** upper rail **22** portion to contact and support the panel section **48** across its transverse width in the closed position, and to resist sag or flexing of the panel section **48**, and to maintain flushness and alignment of the panel section **48** to the lateral sections **76**.

In another example shown in FIGS. **11** and **12**, the movable panel section **48** extends the width of the casket box **20** such that the end panel **40** includes the movable panel section **48** and the end panel bottom portion **46**, which are attached via a continuous hinge **55** extending the transverse width of the end panel **40**. The movable panel section **48** is fixedly attached to the first hinge plate **56**, for example, by welding the movable panel section **48** to the first hinge plate **56**. The second hinge

plate **57** of the continuous hinge **55** is fixedly attached to the bottom portion **46** of the end panel **40**, for example, by welding the second hinge plate **57** to the bottom portion **46**, and the bottom portion **46** is in turn welded to the floor panel **26** and the adjacent side panels **30** to operatively connect the movable panel section **48** to the casket box **20**. A reinforcement member **38** extends the transverse width of the casket box **20** and the length of the continuous hinge **55**, and is fixedly attach to the casket box **20** and to the second hinge plate **57** to reinforce the continuous hinge **55** and to reinforce and stabilize the casket box **20**. As previously described, the bottom portion **46** of the end panel **40** may also include a integral rib or stiffening channel **47** to stiffen the casket box **20** structure, and the reinforcement member **38** may be attached to the stiffening channel **47**.

In the example shown in FIGS. **11** and **12**, the opening **78** extends the full transverse cross-section of the casket box **20** defined by the side panels **30** and floor panel **26** of the casket box **20**, and such that the clearance gap **19** between the panel section **48** and the casket box **20** with the panel section **48** in the closed position is defined by the end panel **40** mitered and vertical edges and the side panel **30** mitered and vertical edges. In the example shown, the transverse member **60** is positioned as described for the example shown in FIGS. **1-5**, such that each member end of the transverse member **60** is positioned in the upper rail recess **23** defined by a side panel **30** upper rail **22** and welded or otherwise fixedly attached to the side interior surface **36** to connect the opposing side panels **30**. The transverse member **60** shown in FIGS. **11-12** is positioned flush with the end of the side panels **30**, such that the transverse member **60** is fixedly attached so as to be perpendicular to the opposing side panels **30** and substantially parallel to the floor panel **26**, to reinforce and stabilize the casket box **20** and to provide a substantially rectangular opening **78** through which the casket insert **69** may be insert into and removed from the casket box **20** as previously described.

The transverse member **60** in the example shown includes threaded interfaces **61** located respectively adjacent the transverse member ends **65**. The threaded interfaces **61** are configured to receive locking members **50** inserted through the through holes **49** in the end panel upper rail portion **41** and positioned to align with the threaded interfaces **61** with the panel section **48** in the closed position. In the closed position, a clearance gap **19** is defined between the side panel **30** vertical and mitered edges and the end panel **40** vertical and mitered edges. The through holes **49** in the end panel **40** and the threaded interfaces **61** in the transverse member **60** are located such that the locking member **50** in the installed position extends into the upper rail recess **23**, and is located immediately adjacent the clearance gap **19** defined by the adjacent edges of the end panel **40** and the side panel **30**, to retain the movable panel section **48** in a closed position such that the clearance gap **19** is of uniform width between the adjacent vertical edges and the adjacent mitered edges of the movable panel section **48** and the side panels **30**. In one example, the panel section **48** is closely aligned to the side panels **30** in the closed position such that the clearance gap **19** is substantially non-existent, e.g., the adjacent edges of the side panel **30** and the end panel **40** are in continuous contact.

In another example, and as previously described, edge protectors **59** may be applied to the edges of the movable panel section **48** to cushion contact between the movable panel section **48**, to prevent scuffing of the adjacent edges, and/or to fill or minimize the clearance gap **19** between the panel section **48** and the adjacent side panel **30** to provide an aesthetically pleasing appearance. The edge protectors **59** may be configured to protect a portion of the edge, such as the vertical portion, or may be configured to extend the full length of the edge defining the clearance gap **19**. In another example (not shown), an ornamental such as a corner molding may be operatively attached to the exterior of the casket box **20** with the panel section **48** in the closed position, to at least partially cover the clearance gap **19** and/or to minimize visibility of the clearance gap **19** when viewing the exterior surface of the casket.

The example shown in FIGS. **11** and **12** is non-limiting, and it would be understood that an arched transverse member **60** as shown in and described for FIGS. **8-10** could be used with the panel section **48** configuration shown in FIGS. **11-12**, to provide additional vertical clearance between the transverse member **60** and the top surface **73** of the insert. The arched transverse member **60** would be offset longitudinally inboard from the end of the casket box **20** such that the arched portion **64** of the transverse member **60** extends into the casket lid cavity **14** with the casket lid **11** in a closed-casket position. Similar to the configuration shown in FIGS. **8-10**, a travel stop **79** would be positioned in the upper rail recess **23** of each side panel **30** and attached to the side interior surface **36** of the upper rail recess **23** immediately adjacent to the end of the side panel **30**, such that the panel section **48** in the closed position contacts the travel stops **79**, and is prevented from moving inwardly into the interior area of the casket box **20**. The panel section **48** is retained against the travel stops **79** in a generally vertical position, e.g., substantially perpendicular to the floor surface **29** and to the side panels **30**, to align the panel section **48** with the adjacent side panels **30**, and/or to minimize the clearance gap **19** between the panel section **48** and each adjacent side panel **30**. Each of the travel stops **79** defines a through hole **49** positioned relative to the corresponding threaded interface **61** of the transverse member **60** such that each through hole **49** of the travel stop **79** is in alignment with a respective corresponding through hole **49** of the panel section **48** and the corresponding threaded interface **61** defined by the arched transverse member **60**. The panel section **48** is retained to the casket box **20** in the closed position by locking members **50** which are of sufficient length to extend through the through hole **49** of the panel section **48** and the through hole **49** of the travel stop **79** to engage the threaded interface **61** of the transverse member **60**.

A method for making the reusable casket **10** including the casket box **20** is provided herein. In a first example, a method of making the casket box **20** shown in FIGS. **1-10** is described, the casket box **20** having one end panel **40** defining a movable panel section **48** such that the casket box **20** can be opened at one end, and another end panel **40** which is a conventional, e.g., a non-opening end panel **40**. For clarity of description in the present example, the non-opening end panel **40** will be referred to as a head end panel **40**, and the end panel **40** having the movable, e.g., openable, panel section **48** will be referred to as the foot end panel **40**. In the method, the side panels **30** are pre-formed by stamping and/or or bending sheet metal to define the side upper rail, side intermediate and side lower rail portions **31**, **33**, **32** and bottom portions (not shown) of the side panels **30**. Similarly, the head and foot end panels **40** are pre-formed, for example, by stamping and/or bending sheet metal to define the end upper rail portion **41**, end intermediate portion **43**, end lower rail portion **42** and bottom portion **46** of each end panel **40** as shown in FIGS. **6**A-**6**D.

The side panels **30** and the head end panel **40** are welded to the floor panel **26** such that the side panels **30** and head end panel **40** extend vertically upward from the horizontal floor panel **26**. The non-opening head end panel **40** is welded to the

adjacent side panels **30** to join the respective side panel **30** miter and vertical edges to the respective head end panel **40** miter and vertical edges, to form panel to panel weld seams **28** (similar to the panel to panel weld seams **28** shown in FIG. **3** attaching the side panel **30** to the foot end panel **40**) to partially form the casket box **20**. Guide rods **18** are fixedly attached to the side interior surface **36** of the respective side panels **30**, for example, by welding. Optionally, the guide rods **18** may be welded to the side panels **30** prior to attaching the side panels **30** to the floor panel **26**. Guide rails **27** are fixedly attached to the floor surface **29** of the floor panel **26**, for example, by welding or otherwise adhering the guide rails **27** to the floor panel **26**. Optionally, the guide rails **27** may be attached to the floor panel **26** prior to attaching the side panels **30** to the floor panel **26**, or as described previously herein, the guide rails **27** may be integral to the floor panel **26**, for example, stamped into the floor panel **26**.

Prior to welding the foot end panel **40** shown in FIGS. **6**A-**6**D to the casket box **20**, and referring to FIGS. **7**A-**7**B, perforations **74** are formed in the foot end panel **40** along cut lines shown as broken lines in FIGS. **7**A-**7**B to define a central section **77** of the end panel **40** which will be separated from the end panel **40** and welded to the continuous hinge **55** to form the movable panel section **48** shown in FIGS. **1**-**5**. The perforations **74** may be configured as a series of intermittent slits **74** (shown) or small holes (not shown) formed along the cut lines. The perforations **74** are separated along the cut line by uncut material **75**. The uncut material **75** may be removed after welding the foot end panel **40** to the casket box **20**, to separate the panel section **48** from the end panel **40**, as further described herein. Optionally, the uncut material **75** along the cut line may be scribed or otherwise marked to visually identify the cut line during separation of the panel section **48** from the end panel **40** in a subsequent operation. The perforations **74** may be formed by any suitable metal cutting means including by way of non-limiting example, drilling, cutting, punching, blanking, or other forms of metal cutting, for example, laser or plasma cutting. In the example shown, the perforations **74** are formed by laser cutting.

Perforating and/or scribing the cut lines **75** defining the panel section **48** provides the advantage of retaining the panel section **48** in a fixed spatial relationship to the remainder of the end panel **40** during welding of the end panel **40** to the casket box **20** and optionally, during welding of the panel section **48** to the continuous hinge **55**, as will be described in further detail herein, such that the remaining material can be cut between the perforations **74** after the end panel **40** is fixed in place to provide a uniform gap clearance defined by the cut line and to facilitate alignment of the panel section **48** and the lateral sections **76** of the end panel **40** by cutting the panel section **48** from the end panel **40** to which it will reconnected via the continuous hinge **55**, such that the panel section **48** and end panel **40** remain a matched set through fabrication and assembly of the casket box **20**. Perforating and/or scribing the cut lines (shown as broken lines in FIGS. **7**A-**7**B) defining the panel section **48** provides the advantage of reducing the amount of material which must be later cut to separate the panel section **48** from the end panel **40**.

The through holes **49** defined by the end panel upper rail portion **41** are formed in the foot end panel **40** by any suitable metal forming means, which may include, by way of non-limiting example, drilling, cutting, laser cutting, punching, blanking, or otherwise forming the through holes **49**. The through holes **49** may be formed in the foot end panel **40** prior to or concurrently with forming the foot end panel **40** shown in FIGS. **6**A-**6**D. For example, the through holes **49** may be punched in the foot end panel **40** during a stamping operation forming the foot end panel **40** shown in FIGS. **6**A-**6**D. The through holes **49** may be formed in the foot end panel **40** concurrently with perforating the foot end panel **40** shown in FIGS. **7**A-**7**B, or after perforating the foot end panel **40**, for example, such that the perforations **74** may be used as a reference or datum to positioning the holes **49**, **61** in the panel section **48**. The through holes **49** may be formed after the foot end panel **40** and the transverse member **60** have been welded to the casket box **20**, for example by drilling, such that the through holes **49** may be positioned using the threaded interfaces **61** of the transverse member **60** as a reference for placement of the through holes **49**.

In a first example sequence of operations, the perforated end panel **40** is welded to the casket box **20** by welding the bottom portion **46** of the perforated end panel **40** to the bottom portions (not shown) of the floor panel **26** and to the side panels **30** and by welding the end panel **40** vertical and mitered edges to the corresponding side panel **30** vertical and mitered edges to form the weld seams **28** shown in FIG. **3**. The casket box **20** may be fixtured during welding (not shown), for example, to orient and/or square up the floor, side, and/or end panels **26**, **30**, **40** and/or to hold the floor, side, and/or end panels **26**, **30**, **40** in a fixed orientation during the welding process to obtain dimensional and positional accuracy of the floor, side, and/or end panels **26**, **30**, **40** relative to each other during fabrication of the casket box **20**. After welding the perforated panel to the casket box **20**, the transverse member **60** is positioned with a member end in the upper rail recess **23** of each of the opposing side panels **30**. The transverse member **60** is positioned for welding such that it is substantially perpendicular to the side panels **30** and parallel to the perforated end panel **40**, to align the end panel **40** through holes **49** with the threaded interfaces **61** defined by the transverse member **60**.

In the example shown in FIGS. **3**-**5**, the transverse member **60** is positioned for welding in the side panel **30** upper rail **22** immediately adjacent the ends of the side panel **30** and proximate to the perforated end panel **40**, and is fixedly attached in position to the side panels **30**, for example, by welding each member end to a respective side interior surface **36** of the side panel **30** upper rail recess **23**. The transverse member **60** may be positioned in the end panel **40** upper rail recess **23** and in contact with the lateral sections **76** of the perforated end panel **40** and each of the member ends **65** may be fixedly attached to a respective lateral section **76** of the perforated end panel **40**, for example, by welding the member end to the interior surface of the upper rail recess **23** defined by the lateral section **76** at the weld attachment points **66**. The transverse member **60** so positioned with the member end welded to both the side panel **30** and the lateral section **76** of the end panel **40** stabilizes and contributes strength to the casket box **20** in the transverse direction, such that the casket box **20** resists twisting and/or distortion and maintains dimensional stability over repeated use as a rent casket, e.g., over time and repeated movement of loaded casket inserts **69** into and out of the casket box **20**.

In the example shown in FIGS. **8**-**10**, the transverse member **60** includes an arched portion **64**. The arched transverse member **60** is positioned in the side panel **30** upper rail **22** such that the arched transverse member **60** is offset longitudinally inward from the ends of the side panel **30** and from the perforated end panel **40**, and is fixedly attached in position to the side panels **30**, for example, by welding each member end to a respective side interior surface **36** of the side panel **30** upper rail recess **23**. The transverse member **60** so positioned with the member end welded to both side panels **30** stabilizes and contributes strength to the casket box **20** in the transverse

direction, such that the casket box **20** resists twisting and/or distortion and maintains dimensional stability over repeated use as a rent casket **10**, e.g., over time and the repeated movement of loading casket inserts **69** into and out of the casket box **20**. Travel stops **79** are positioned as shown in FIGS. **8** and **9** and fixedly attached, for example, by welding each travel stop **79** to the interior surface of the upper rail recess **23** of the respective lateral section **76** of the end panel **40**, such that the travel stops **79** extend into the opening **78** as shown, and with the through hole **49** of each travel stop **79** aligned to the threaded interface **61** of the transverse member **60** and the through hole **49** of the panel section **48** in the closed position. The travel stop **79** may be positioned during welding, in one example, by inserting a locking element **50** or a positioning fixture (not shown) through the through hole **49** of the perforated end panel **40**, the through hole **49** of the travel stop **79**, and into the threaded interface **61** such that the travel stop **79** is retained at or positioned in the aligned position during welding of the travel stop **79** to the lateral section **76**.

After the transverse member **60** is welded to the casket box **20**, in a next step the uncut material **75** between the horizontal perforations **74**, e.g., between the perforations **74** defining the horizontal bottom **72** edge of the panel section **48** as shown in FIG. **7**A, may be removed prior to assembling the continuous hinge **55** to the casket box **20**. The uncut material **75** may be removed by cutting along the cut line using a metal cutting tool such as a reciprocating or rotary cutter, grinding wheel, plasma cutter, or other suitable metal cutting method to join the horizontal perforations **74** to form a single horizontal perforation **74** extending the width of the panel section **48**. The cut edge may be finished by deburring, grinding, etc., to provide a continuous horizontal cut line. The continuous horizontal perforation **74** along the bottom **72** edge of the panel section **48** separates the bottom **72** edge of the panel section **48** from the bottom portion **46** of the foot end panel **40**, while leaving panel section **48** attached to the lateral sections **76** by the remaining vertical portions of the uncut material **75**.

In a next step, the continuous hinge **55** may be positioned in the interior of the casket box **20** such that the continuous hinge **55** is aligned with the horizontal perforation **74** extending the width of the panel section **48**, and with the first hinge plate **56** in contact with the bottom portion **46** of the end panel **40** and the second hinge plate **57** in contact with the bottom **72** edge of the panel section **48**, as shown in FIGS. **4** and **9**. The continuous hinge **55** is then fixedly attached in position, for example, by welding the first hinge plate **56** in position to the bottom portion **46** of the end panel **40** and welding the second hinge plate **57** in position to the bottom **72** edge of the panel section **48**. The panel section **48** is held in position during welding of the continuous hinge **55** by the uncut material **75** extending between the vertical perforations **74** and retaining the panel section **48** to the lateral sections **76** of the end panel **40**.

The reinforcement member **38** is positioned as shown in FIGS. **3-5** and **8-10**, such that the reinforcement member **38** extends the width of the floor panel **26** and is substantially parallel to the transverse member **60** and perpendicular to the side panels **30**. The reinforcement member **38** is positioned adjacent to or overlapping the first hinge plate **56** and in contact with the bottom portion **46** of the end panel **40**, as shown in FIGS. **3-5** and **8-10**, and is welded in position by welding the transverse edges of the reinforcement member **38** to the adjacent first hinge plate **56** and to the bottom portion **46** of the end panel **40**, and welding the member end portions **59** to the side panels **30** at the weld attachment points **66**.

The remaining uncut material **75** separating the vertical perforations **74** is removed, for example, using a cutting or grinding wheel, rotary or reciprocating, plasma cutter, etc., to form the vertical clearance gaps **19** between the panel section **48** and the lateral sections **76** to separate the panel section **48** from the lateral sections **76** of the end panel **40** such that the separated panel section **48** is rotatably movable via the continuous hinge **55** between the closed and open position. Completing the welding of the casket box **20**, including welding of the end panel **40** to the side and floor panels **30**, **26** and welding of the transverse member **60**, continuous hinge **55**, and (optionally) the reinforcement member **38**, prior to removing the uncut material **75** to fully separate the panel section **48** from the bottom **72** and lateral sections **76** of the end panel **40** aligns the movable panel section **48** to the transverse member **60**, the continuous hinge **55**, and the lateral sections **76** of the end panel **40** such that when the clearance gaps **19** are formed by removing the remaining vertical portions of uncut material **75**, no further alignment or adjustment of the position of the panel section **48** is required, and the alignment and position of the panel section **48** is unaffected by weld distortion. Additional advantages of this method include, for example, clearance gaps **19** of uniform width and appearance between the panel section **48** which are unaffected by welding distortion, accurate and precise alignment of the panel section **48** to the opening **78** and between the through holes **49** and the threaded interfaces **61** of the transverse member **60**, such that the panel section **48** is not distorted when attached to the transverse member **60** in the closed position, fabrication of the movable panel section **48** and the end panel **40** as a matched set, etc.

It would be understood that the sequence of steps may be varied from the sequence(s) described herein, within the scope of the disclosure. For example, the reinforcement member **38** may be welded to the casket box **20** before or after removing the uncut material **75** between the perforations **74** fully separating the panel section **48** from the end panel **40**. In another example, the panel section **48** may be retained to the transverse member **60** by locking members **50** during one or more of welding of the continuous hinge **55**, welding of the reinforcement member **38**, removing the uncut material **75**, etc. to align the panel section **48** to the transverse member **60** and to the casket box **20** during these operations.

The method continues with additional steps to finish the casket box **20**, which may include, for example, finishing the edges of the panel section **48** and lateral sections **76** of the end panel **40** defining the clearance gap **19**, grinding and/or polishing the exterior surface of the weld seams **28** joining the end, side, and floor panels **40**, **30**, **26** in preparation for additional surface finishing such as painting or other surface finishing, surface finishing the exterior surface of the casket box **20**, which may include buffing, polishing, texturizing such as brush finishing, painting, coating, glazing, etc., the exterior surface to provide an appearance surface; attaching trim, handles, locks, lid supports **12**, etc.

In a second example method used to fabricate the casket box **20** shown in FIGS. **11-12**, the casket box **20** is partially formed as described previously, including the side panels **30**, floor panel **26**, head end panel **40**, guide rods **18** and guide rails **27**. In the example shown in FIGS. **11-12**, the foot end panel **40** may be perforated to provide horizontal perforations **74** corresponding to a cut line separating the bottom portion **46** of the end panel **40** from the remaining portion of the end panel **40**, where the remaining portion of the end panel **40** defines the panel section **48** and is attachable to a continuous hinge **55** which extends the transverse width of the casket box **20**, as shown in FIG. **11**. In one example, the foot end panel **40**

may be attached to the casket box **20** prior to separating the panel section **48** from the end panel **40** by welding the bottom portion **46** of the end panel **40** to the side panels **30** and the floor panel **26**. The casket box **20** may be squared up to align the vertical and mitered edges of the end panel **40** to the vertical and mitered edges of the side panels **30**, that is, to align the panel section **48** portion of the end panel **40** to the side panels **30** such that the clearance gaps **19** between the panel section **48** and the side panels **30** are uniform. The transverse member **60** may be inserted and welded in position to retain the side panels **30** in the squared up position. The panel section **48** may be attached to the transverse member **60** by locking bolts **50** before or after welding the transverse member **60** in position and prior to removing the uncut material **75** between the horizontal perforations **74**, to retain the panel section **48** in position and aligned to the side panels **30** during attachment of the continuous hinge **55** to the casket box **20**. The uncut material **75** is removed between the horizontal perforations **74** to separate the panel section **48** from the bottom portion **46** of the end panel **40**, and the continuous hinge **55** is positioned in the interior of the casket box **20** and welded to the panel section **48** and the bottom portion **46** of the end panel **40** as previously described for FIGS. **3-5**. The reinforcement member **38** may then be positioned and welded to the second hinge plate **57** the casket box **20** as shown in FIG. **11** to reinforce the casket box **20** and the continuous hinge **55** in the transverse direction. Alternatively, the transverse member **60** may be attached to the panel section **48** using locking members **50** and the transverse member **60** and panel section **48** aligned to the side panels **30** and opening **78** prior to welding the transverse member **60** in position.

Other methods of forming the casket box **20** of FIGS. **11-12** may be used. For example, the panel section **48** may be non-integral to the end panel **40**, such that the end panel **40** consists of the bottom portion **46** only. The floor panel **26** may be configured such that the bottom portion **46** of the end panel **40** is integral to the floor panel **26**, eliminating the need to attach this portion as a separate element, and such that the panel section **48** shown in FIG. **11** is directly attached to the floor panel **26** via the continuous hinge **55**. Alignment of the non-integral panel section **48** to the opening **78** may be optimized by, in a first example, attaching the panel section **48** to the transverse member **60** and positioning the panel section **48** with the transverse member **60** attached in the opening **78**, squaring up the side and floor panels **30**, **26** to the panel section **48** to align the clearance gaps **19**, and welding the transverse member **60** in position, to retain the panel section **48** in an aligned position to the casket box **20** while subsequently welding the first and second plates **56**, **57** of the continuous hinge **55** to the panel section **48** and floor panel **26**, respectively, to complete attachment of the panel section **48** to the casket box **20**. Optionally, the first hinge plate **56** may be welded to the panel section **48** prior to positioning the transverse member **60** with the panel section **48** attached, such that the continuous hinge **55** is aligned to the casket box **20** concurrently with alignment of the panel section **48** to the opening **78**, and is attached by welding the second plate of the continuous hinge **55** to the floor panel **26** before or after welding the transverse member **60** in the aligned position.

In another example (not shown), the casket box **20** of FIGS. **11-12** may be fabricated including a transverse member **60** including an arched portion **64**. The transverse member **60** including the arched portion **64** is welded to the upper rail portions **31** of the side panels **30** as discussed related to FIGS. **8-10**, such that the transverse member **60** is offset longitudinally toward the center of the casket box **20**, so that with the casket in a closed-casket condition the arched portion **64** of the transverse member **60** extends into the lid cavity **14** and does not interfere with the lid frame **13**. Travel stops **79** may be positioned in the upper rail recess **23** of the side upper rail portion **31** immediately adjacent the end of the side panel **30**, to prevent inward travel of the panel section **48**. The travel stop **79** may include a through hole **49** to receive the locking member **50**, as shown in FIG. **8**.

The method of forming the casket box **20** of FIGS. **11-12** continues with additional steps to finish the casket box **20**, which may include, for example, finishing the edges of the panel section **48** and lateral sections **76** of the end panel **40** defining the clearance gap **19**, grinding and/or polishing the exterior surface of the weld seams **28** joining the end, side, and floor panels **40**, **30**, **26** in preparation for additional surface finishing such as painting or other surface finishing, surface finishing the exterior surface of the casket box **20**, which may include buffing, polishing, texturizing such as brush finishing, painting, coating, glazing, etc., the exterior surface to provide an appearance surface; attaching trim, handles, locks, lid supports **12**, etc.

The examples described herein are intended to be non-limiting, and other configurations and method of fabricating the metal casket box **20** including the movable panel section **48** and transverse member **60** may be used. For example, the panel section **48** may be formed separately from the end panel **40**. In this example, the foot end panel **40** could be formed to define the opening **78** prior to being welded to the side and floor panels **30**, **26** of the casket box **20**, or could be formed as shown in FIGS. **7A-7B**, and the central section **77** of the foot end panel **40** removed as waste material after welding the foot end panel **40** and the transverse member **60** to the casket box **20**, such that the central section **77** is removed after the casket box **20** has been squared up and reinforced by the transverse member **60** to stabilize the end panel **40** prior to removing the central portion. A non-integral panel section **48** can then be aligned to the opening **78** and fixedly attached to the casket box **20**. In this example, the continuous hinge **55** may be attached to the non-integral panel section **48** by welding, riveting, etc. the first plate of the continuous hinge **55** to the panel section **48** prior to aligning the panel section **48** with the continuous hinge **55** attached to the opening **78** and welding the second plate of the continuous hinge **55** to the bottom portion **46** of the end panel **40** to rotatably attach the panel section **48** to the casket box **20**. The non-integral panel section **48** may be aligned to the opening **78** and/or to the transverse member **60**, for example, by fastening the non-integral panel to the transverse member **60** using locking members **50** to position the non-integral panel section **48** prior to attaching the continuous hinge **55** to the panel section **48** and/or the casket box **20**. The transverse member **60** may be welded to the side panels **30** to stabilize and square up the casket box **20** prior to welding the foot end panel **40** to the casket box **20**, such that the welded transverse member **60** acts as a fixture to position the side panels **30** relative to each other and to the floor panel **26** to receive the foot end panel **40**. An end panel **40** defining the opening **78** may be welded to the side and bottom **72** panels **26**, **30**, **40**, and a non-integral panel section **48** may be fastened to the transverse member **60** using locking members **50**, prior to aligning the non-integral panel section **48** attached to the transverse member **60** to the opening **78**, then welding the transverse member **60** in position to the side panels **30**. These additional examples are non-limiting, and other configurations and combinations of method steps may be used to make the reusable casket **10** as described herein and shown in the figures.

The detailed description and the drawings or figures are supportive and descriptive of the invention, but the scope of

the invention is defined solely by the claims. While some of the best modes and other embodiments for carrying out the claimed invention have been described in detail, various alternative designs and embodiments exist for practicing the invention defined in the appended claims.

The invention claimed is:

1. A casket box for a casket insert, the casket box comprising:

a floor panel;

opposing side panels, wherein each side panel defines a side upper rail portion;

opposing end panels;

an opening defined by one of the end panels;

the one end panel comprising a panel section rotatably attached to the casket box and movable between a closed position enclosing the opening and an open position allowing longitudinal movement of the casket insert into and out of the casket box through the opening; and

a first interface defined by the one end panel;

a second interface disposed in the side upper rail portion;

wherein with the panel section in the closed position, the first and second interfaces are arranged such that the second interface is engaged by a locking member received via the first interface; and

wherein the casket box is made of a metal material.

2. The casket box of claim **1**, wherein at least one side panel comprises a travel stop extending into the opening such that the travel stop is in contact with the panel section in the closed position.

3. The casket box of claim **2**, wherein the travel stop is operatively attached to the side panel.

4. The casket box of claim **2**, wherein the travel stop is at least partially disposed in the side upper rail portion.

5. The casket box of claim **2**, wherein the travel stop defines the second interface.

6. The casket box of claim **1**, further comprising:

a transverse member adjacent the panel section and connecting the opposing side panels such that the opening is partially defined by the transverse member.

7. The casket box of claim **6**, wherein the transverse member defines the second interface.

8. A casket box for a casket insert, the casket box comprising:

a floor panel;

opposing side panels;

opposing end panels;

an opening defined by one of the end panels;

the one end panel comprising a panel section rotatably attached to the casket box and movable between a closed position enclosing the opening and an open position allowing longitudinal movement of the casket insert into and out of the casket box through the opening;

a travel stop operatively attached to one of the side panels such that the travel stop is in contact with the panel section in the closed position;

wherein the casket box is made of a metal material;

wherein each side panel defines a side upper rail portion; and

wherein the travel stop is disposed within the side upper rail portion of the one of the side panels.

9. The casket box of claim **8**, wherein the travel stop extends from the side panel into the opening.

10. The casket box of claim **8**, wherein the one end panel defines an end upper rail portion; and

wherein the travel stop is in contact with the end upper rail portion in the closed position.

11. The casket box of claim **8**, wherein the travel stop defines a locking interface engaged by a locking member received via the one end panel.

12. The casket box of claim **11**, wherein each side panel defines a side upper rail portion; and

wherein the locking interface is disposed within the side upper rail portion.

13. The casket box of claim **11**, wherein the locking interface is disposed in the opening adjacent the side panel.

14. The casket box of claim **8**, wherein the panel section is rotatably attached to the casket box via a hinge; and

wherein the hinge extends the width of the opening.

15. The casket box of claim **8**, further comprising:

a hinge rotatably attaching the panel section to the casket box; and

a reinforcement member attached to the casket box adjacent the hinge.

16. A casket box for a casket insert, the casket box comprising:

a floor panel;

opposing side panels;

opposing end panels;

an opening defined by one of the end panels;

the one end panel comprising a panel section rotatably attached to the casket box and movable between a closed position enclosing the opening and an open position allowing longitudinal movement of the casket insert into and out of the casket box through the opening;

the one end panel comprising first and second lateral sections;

wherein each lateral section is fixedly attached to a respective one of the opposing side panels such that the panel section is intermediate the lateral sections;

wherein the panel section is movable relative to the lateral sections;

a travel stop operatively attached to one of the lateral sections such that the travel stop is in contact with the panel section in the closed position;

wherein the travel stop defines a locking interface engaged by a locking member received via the one end panel; and

wherein the casket box is made of a metal material.

17. The casket box of claim **16**, further comprising:

a transverse member adjacent the panel section and connecting the opposing side panels such that the opening is partially defined by the transverse member.

18. A casket box for a casket insert, the casket box comprising:

a floor panel;

opposing side panels;

opposing end panels;

an opening defined by one of the end panels;

the one end panel comprising a panel section rotatably attached to the casket box and movable between a closed position enclosing the opening and an open position allowing longitudinal movement of the casket insert into and out of the casket box through the opening;

a travel stop operatively attached to one of the side panels such that the travel stop is in contact with the panel section in the closed position;

wherein the casket box is made of a metal material; and

wherein the travel stop defines a locking interface engaged by a locking member received via the one end panel.

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